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Dissertation


THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN COTTON
IN THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Quite simply the problem which this dissertation seeks to solve is: How much actual influence did John Cotton have in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Cotton has been called (by a Professor of Literature) "the unmitred pope of a pope-hating commonwealth."¹ Roman Catholicism was anathema in the colony, but no one has ever studied the influence of the colony's so-called pontiff. The same professor, Dr. Moses Coit Tyler, has written that Cotton achieved "an ascendancy more sovereign, probably, than any other American clergyman has ever reached."² That may be so, still Professor Tyler did not prove it, nor has anyone else. This present study, then, is an attempt to discover how wide-spread and strong was the influence of John Cotton in the Puritan colony of the Massachusetts Bay.

The sources for the study are rather limited. The

1. Tyler, HAL, I, 211. In the system of footnotes in the dissertation the titles of the volumes cited are abbreviated by using initials of the important words in those titles, thus the work cited in this footnote is Tyler's History of American Literature. Every volume referred to is listed in the bibliography where the works are arranged by author.

2. Loc. cit.

basic and earliest biography of Cotton is Samuel Whiting's Life. This was printed originally sometime between 1652 and 1658; it is accessible in Alexander Young's Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay.³ Young's volume also contains a letter from Cotton to his wife, written while he was hiding in London prior to his flight to America; his letter of resignation to his Bishop; and a letter written from America to some of his colleagues still in England, giving his reasons for going to New England.⁴

Whiting's Life is regrettably brief, encompassing less than five thousand words. It is not so much a biography as it is a biographical sketch. His style is laudatory, though not offensively so. Whiting spoke truly when he wrote, "I could speak much more; but at this present want strength." He knew Cotton well and spent most of his life near him.⁵ Whiting was a Cambridge man, entering Cambridge about the time Cotton left, and he spent his English ministry at Skirbeck, less than a mile from Boston. Three years after Cotton departed for America, Whiting followed and settled in Lynn as the pastor there, living to the ripe age of eighty-three. Suggestively, Whiting says little about

3. Young, CFP, 419-431.

4. Ibid., 432-444.

5. This paragraph based on ibid., 430n.

Cotton's American ministry, being content to write:

How useful he was to England, to New England, to magistrates, ministers, people, in public, in private, by preachings, counsels, dissolving hard knots and answering difficult questions.⁶

Another biography of lesser value is one by John Norton, published in 1658 and reprinted in 1842 by Dr. Enoch Pond, a professor at the Bangor Theological Seminary. Norton, a Cambridge graduate, came to New England in 1635 and became the pastor at Ipswich. When Cotton was on his death-bed, he suggested Norton as his successor, and Norton was chosen. The title of Norton's biography is indicative of the verbosity of its contents: Abel being dead, yet speaketh: or the Life and Death of that deservedly famous man of God, Mr. John Cotton, late teacher of the Church of Christ at Boston, in New England.

The verbiage in the book is unbelievable; Norton runs on for five pages before his hero is born and then continues to run for eight more after Cotton is buried. Norton bases his work on Whiting's biography, adding few facts but many words, and taking delight in parading his acquaintance with the ancients--Diogenes, Socrates, Plato, Seneca, Dionysius, and others. To say he bases his work on Whiting is perhaps

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6. Ibid., 429.

an understatement--he literally transcribes paragraph after paragraph from Whiting. Here is a sample of his style taken almost at random; he is speaking of the attacks some English churchmen made on Cotton for his defense of New England Congregationalism:

Some reverend, learned and godly men (Maply in zeal against the Congregational-way) sharpened their style against him. There is an excess in too much salt, and not a little to be complained of in personal and causeless aspersions from good men. That smarts, these defile; that makes less comfortable, these tend to make us unprofitable. Roses are not without their pricks. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and were displeased with him; but his bowe abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. From thence is the shepherd, and the stone of Israel. And honest-minded (saith Xenophon) gets by enmity, and Plutarch writes a treatise concerning benefiting by our enemies, adorning his discourse with that of Jason of Thessaly, whose enemy stabbing him, etc.⁷

To Norton we owe an account of Cotton's conversion which apparently was told to Norton by Cotton himself and is therefore valuable. He also quotes from John Davenport, telling of a conference he and some others had with Cotton in London, where Cotton had fled prior to his voyage to New England. The Davenport quotation is possibly from

7. Pond (ed.), MJC, 74, 75.

a sermon preached by Davenport and circulated in the manuscript.⁸ Among other additions to Whiting, Norton tells of the study habit of Cotton, of his personal devotional practices and the manner of his death.

Cotton Mather, writing in the latter part of the seventeenth century, began the chapter on his grandfather found in his famous Magnalia Christi Americana:

Were I master of the pen wherewith
Paddadius embalmed his Chrysostom, the Greek
patriark...or, were I owner of the quill
wherewith, among the moderns, Beza celebrated
his immortal Calvin, or Fabius immortalized
his venerable Beza; the merits of John Cotton
[my grandfather] would oblige me to employ it,
in the preserving of his famous memory.⁹

Possibly family pride prompted Mather to say more about his illustrious forefather than the facts warranted; that is natural. He, too, based his sketch of Cotton on Whiting's biography, although he added a number of other facts which no doubt were by his time family history. By and large it is true, though, that in reading the early New England Chronicles "we are reading not a history but

8. The correspondence between John Davenport and John Cotton was destroyed after the latter's death. Only one letter from Davenport to Cotton remains. Calder (ed.) LJD, 83n, 212.

9. Mather, MCA, 252.

a hagiology."¹⁰ Professor Tyler says Cotton Mather, when he spoke of John Cotton, "never lapsed into an understatement."¹¹ Still, behind the incense and candlelight one can discern facts.

The records of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for the years 1628 to 1686 were edited by Dr. Nathaniel Shurtleff and printed in five volumes in 1853 and 1854. The Records are a bare recital of the facts and often disappointing in their silence. For example, the Records tell us that a committee was appointed to draw up "a draught of lawes agreeable to the word of God" for the colony.¹² But we are never told whether the committee actually brought forth anything or not; for that information we must look elsewhere. Again of Mrs. Hutchinson we read her sentence of banishment, that she was to remain at Mr. Cotton's after her first church trial, and we read little else.¹³

John Winthrop's Journal, "The History of New England", is the pièce de résistance; without it any study of Cotton approaching adequacy would be impossible. Cotton was Winthrop's pastor, and the parishioner looked up to his spiritual guide with admiration and respect. He would say nothing about his reverend friend which might

10. J. H. Doyle quoted in Adams, MIHH, 41.

11. Tyler, HAL, I, 214.

12. Shurtleff (ed.), RGCM, I, 174.

13. Ibid., I, 207, 225.

be regarded as derogatory. When his hero uses one of his lecture-day speeches to castigate the deputies for proposing to turn from office some officials on account of their age, Winthrop writes: "He took occasion from his text, the next lecture day, to confute, and sharply"--then he checks himself and puts in parentheses "in his mild manner," to prevent the reader from thinking meanly of Cotton.¹⁴ Winthrop was accused at the time of protecting Cotton in his account of the Antinomian Controversy, The Short Story, and a study of the documents reveals the charge to be true.¹⁵ Yet Winthrop gives us much information we are able to obtain in no other place as to the part Cotton played in the affairs of the colony, both political and ecclesiastical.

The documents relevant to the Antinomian Controversy were collected and edited by Charles Francis Adams and published by the Prince Society in 1894 under the title, Antinomianism in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay. In this volume are the list of errors drawn up by the Synod, "A Short Story of the Rise, Reign and Ruin of the Antinomians" written by Winthrop, the verbatim report of the civil trial of Mrs. Hutchinson together with the verbatim report of her

14. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 49.

15. Adams, ACMB, 364.

church trial. Also in the volume is Cotton's justification of his own conduct in the matter, taken from his Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared.

Cotton's own writings are, on the whole, not a fruitful source. Besides the portions on the Hutchinson episode, there are also sections on his attitudes toward conformity in The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared.¹⁶ In his A Defense of Mr. John Cotton from the imputation of Self Contradiction charged on him by Mr. Dan Cawdrey, published posthumously in 1658, are found some autobiographical fragments, pertaining to the occasion of some of his writings. His printed sermons are practically devoid of any contemporary references.

The exchanges between John Cotton and Roger Williams are found in the first four volumes of the Narragansett Club Publications printed in 1866-7. Volume Two is particularly important since it contains Cotton's effort to relieve himself of any share of Williams' banishment.¹⁷ Volume Three contains Williams' Bloody Tenent of Persecution, and Volume Four, The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody. Cotton's futile attempt to clean up the Tenent is not included in the collection. In all, the remains of the

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16. Cotton, WCCC, especially 25-77.

17. Cotton, RMW, 17-35.

Cotton-Williams polemic does not yield much information as to the influence of John Cotton in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The literature on the influence of John Cotton, to say the least, is not extensive. His influence has been taken for granted by those who have written about him. The Massachusetts Bay Colony was a Theocracy, John Cotton was a leading minister, so, of course, they reasoned, he had enormous influence. William Hubbard, a Puritan preacher and one of Massachusetts' first historians, writing about thirty years after Cotton had died, gave as his judgment that Cotton was so influential

whatever he delivered in the pulpit was soon put into an Order of Court, if of a civil, or set up as a practice in the church, if of an ecclesiastical concernment.¹⁸

Almost everyone who writes on Cotton finds an opportunity, sooner or later, to quote that statement by Hubbard. It was in fact one of the reasons I undertook this present study of Cotton. I thought the dissertation would be in large measure an enlargement of Hubbard's opinion, a verification of Cotton's immense influence. I have been disappointed in that respect.

Hubbard himself makes no effort to prove the truth

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18. Hubbard, GHNE, 182.

of his statement by citing examples of Court Orders which Cotton inaugurated or church practices which he established, he simply makes the statement. Hubbard's facts are not always unimpeachable. He makes the assertion that Boston was named "Boston" in 1633 when Cotton came to the settlement; contemporary testimony reveals the town was named in 1630. Hubbard is such an admirer of his brother clergyman that he is ready and eager to claim for him great accomplishments.

Thomas Hutchinson, Governor of Massachusetts (1769-1774) and another historian of the Commonwealth, speaks in his history of "the great influence which Mr. Cotton had in the colony." However, he is writing of the relationship between Hooker and Cotton and giving Cotton's influence as the reason for Hooker's going to Connecticut. He is probably quoting Hubbard indirectly.¹⁹ In another place Hutchinson is more temperate; he says, "Mr. Cotton is supposed to have been more instrumental, in the settlement of their civil as well as ecclesiastical polity, than any other person."²⁰

Unquestionably Hutchinson had in mind when he wrote this, Hubbard's famous statement on Cotton's influence, and weighing it was unable to find collateral evidence. There-

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19. Hutchinson, HMB, I, 40; Hubbard, GHNE, 173.

20. Hutchinson, HMB, I, 31f. Italics mine.

upon he set the influence down as "supposed"; for Hutchinson offers no proof of Cotton's power in church and state.

No one has ever tried to determine the strength of Cotton's influence. Most of his critics and biographers have written with the sole purpose of praise. The most adequate treatment of him is from the pen of Professor Williston Walker, and is included in a volume of lectures entitled Ten New England Leaders.²¹ A Congregationalist, lecturing in a Congregational seminary on a Congregational Father to candidates for the Congregational ministry, may be pardoned for his sympathetic treatment. He does admit, however, that Cotton's conduct in the Antinomian Controversy "is not a page that is pleasant to look upon," but he contends that "it never diminished his commanding influence in New England."²² And he quotes Hubbard with approval, saying that his famous assertion about Cotton's power "is as much truth as exaggeration."²³

Nevertheless, Walker does not illustrate its truth. The "three special features of Cotton's American life", which he singles out as significant, are really significant, but they are not necessarily evidences of his prestige and influence. The first feature is the Anti-

21. Walker, TNEL, 49-94.

22. Ibid., 81.

23. Ibid., 75.

nomian Controversy, and that was not, as we shall see, an example of Cotton's power. The second feature was his controversy with Roger Williams; again not a particularly good illustration of Cotton's influence in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, for Williams was banished only two years after Cotton arrived. The third feature of Cotton's American life was the tracts he wrote "in which he exhibited the distinctive traits of Congregational polity."²⁴ Of this we shall treat more fully later; suffice it to say that a man may write excellent descriptions of a church system without being especially powerful within that system.

The effort has been made in this dissertation to get back to the sources, to study the influence of Cotton as it made itself felt in the life of the Massachusetts Bay colony. Indispensable in this study, as has been said, is the Journal of John Winthrop, one of Cotton's loyal parishioners. Cotton is a prominent character throughout the Journal, though perhaps more in evidence before the Anti-nomian Controversy than after it.

A naive, uncritical reading of the Journal would impress one with the great importance of John Cotton in the colony. It is only as the progress of projects that Cotton fosters is watched that the distorted impression is made

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24. Walker, TNEL, 89.

distinct. Through the lens of Winthrop's Journal one sees the influence of Cotton magnified; by recourse to other documents, such as the Court records, one sees that influence reduced to its actual size.

Briefly, the attempt has been made to examine the extent of Cotton's actual influence by following the outcome of individual proposals, recommendations, and projects behind which he placed the weight of his influence. Winthrop is an invaluable help in this effort, though sometimes his admiration for Cotton leads him to ascribe to his teacher's influence what might with equal warrant be given to some other factor in the scene.

The second chapter of the dissertation is devoted to a glance at the English life of John Cotton. There we see him against the background of England and are able to appreciate the prestige accorded him in New England.

The third chapter is concerned with the status of Cotton in New England. His reputation in England stood him in good stead in New England, but there were other reasons for his prominence in the new colony. We see him as preacher, student, and famed teacher of the church at Boston.

The fourth chapter is an inquiry into the actual influence of Cotton in the civil affairs of the colony, its laws and its legislation.

The fifth chapter attempts to determine how instrumental Cotton was in the shaping of Congregational polity. Hutchinson calls him "The Patriarch of New England." This chapter endeavors to put content into that phrase.

The sixth chapter is a study of Anne Hutchinson and the controversy which centered about her in its relation to Cotton. No other occurrence seems so important to an understanding of Cotton's influence in the commonwealth.

CHAPTER II

JOHN COTTON IN ENGLAND

John Cotton was born December 4, 1584 in Derby, England.¹ Eleven days later he was baptized at St. Alkermund's Church in Derby.² His father, Rowland, or Roland, Cotton, was a lawyer, and he is said to have been a Puritan.³ As the other boys in his town did, John Cotton went to the grammar school in Derby, where he developed under the tutelage of "one Mr. Johnson."⁴

When he was about thirteen years old, John was sent to Cambridge and enrolled in Trinity College. This act might indicate that his father was indeed a Puritan; for Cambridge was a training ground for young Puritans. Professor Franklin Dexter has pointed out that of the nearly one hundred university graduates who came to New England during the first twenty years of its history, more than seventy were graduated from Cambridge University.⁵

Prior to his son's going to Cambridge, Rowland Cotton had not found law a lucrative practice. However, when John

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1. Records of St. Alkermund's Church, cited by Gordon, Art. (1921-22).

2. Loc. cit.

3. Ellis, HFC, 27.

4. Mather, MCA, I, 254.

5. Dexter, Art. (1880).

began his college studies, his father's business increased appreciably so that the father was able to pay for his son's schooling. In later years John saw the hand of Providence in this prospering of his father's profession, and he used to say: "God kept me at the University."⁶ Less devout people saw other reasons for the father's success; one of them was the success of the son at Cambridge.⁷ "Like son, like father," they may have reasoned, "a brilliant son must have a brilliant father."

There can be no question that the scholarship of John Cotton commanded attention. He would have been made a Fellow of Trinity College had not the College been embarrassed at that time by the burden of a building program.⁸ Nevertheless, Emmanuel College made him a Fellow, after testing his linguistic skill by having him translate the third chapter of Isaiah, "containing more hard words than any one paragraph of the Bible."⁹

We cannot say with absolute certainty when Cotton was awarded his Bachelor's degree. The College records at this period are incomplete. We do know that Cotton received his M. A. in 1606, and since the vast majority of students com-

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- 6. Whiting, LJC, in Young, CFP, 420.
- 7. Mather, MCA, I, 254.
- 8. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 420.
- 9. Mather, MCA, I, 254.

pleted their Masters' work four years after their Bachelor's degree, we can safely guess his B. A. was earned in 1602.¹⁰

It was after he had received his M. A. from Trinity College that Cotton transferred to Emmanuel. Here he later became "head-lecturer, and dean, and catechist."¹¹ The head of Emmanuel College was Laurence Chaderton, one of the leaders of the Puritan party in England.¹² He had appeared before King James at Hampton Court in 1604 and vainly urged the king to grant reforms desired by the Puritans.

While at Trinity, Cotton had been touched by the preaching of William Perkins, but he had not given in to it for fear it might interfere with his life as a scholar.¹³ And when he heard the funeral bell toll for Mr. Perkins, "his mind secretly rejoiced in his deliverance from that powerful ministry, by which his conscience had oft been beleaguered."¹⁴ Nevertheless, Cotton could not forever kick against the pricks; subsequently he was converted by the preaching of Richard Sibbes, whose picture Cotton later set up "in that part of his house where he might oftenest look

10. Savage, Art. (1846), 246. Referred to by Young, CFP, 420n.

11. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 421.

12. Walker, TNEL, 57.

13. MacClure, LJC, 18.

14. Mather, MCA, I, 255.

upon it."¹⁵ His conversion was the turning-point of his career and took place sometime after 1602, the date of Perkins' death.¹⁶

In 1609 Cotton first attracted the attention of the University by a funeral oration he gave in Latin for Dr. Robert Some, Master of Peter House.¹⁷ In our day such a mastery of Latin would incite admiration and acclaim, if any listener would be able to identify the language being spoken; in his day it was not the language but the oratorical power and rhetorical construction that called forth praise. His fame resulted in an invitation to preach in the University church, St. Mary's, where he again displayed his preaching prowess and brought more honor on himself. He was invited to preach a second time.

The occasion was eagerly anticipated by the University undergraduates, for Cotton's fame as a brilliant orator had spread throughout the institution. When the day arrived, St. Mary's was filled with those "who prefer the Muses before Moses, who taste Plato more than Paul, and relish the orator of Athens far above the preacher of the cross."¹⁸ No one in the congregation was prepared for what

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15. Loc. cit.

16. Gordon, Art. (1921-22).

17. The facts in this paragraph are from Whiting, in Young, CFP, 421. For date see Gordon, Art. (1921-22).

18. Pond (ed.), MJC, 31.

followed; no one knew that the man who stood in the pulpit was a changed man; he had learned to distinguish "between the words of wisdom and the wisdom of words."¹⁹ He was determined that Jesus Christ and not John Cotton should be the Lord of this event, and he succeeded.

Although the congregation was disappointed, one young scholar, John Preston, was converted by the sermon.²⁰ Preston later became the head of Emmanuel College itself, and one of the most celebrated of Puritans.²¹ Cotton's sermon can hardly be considered a failure, when it gathered into the Puritan fold one who was later to prove so distinguished.

In 1612 Cotton was chosen vicar of the impressive church of St. Botolph's in Boston.²² Less than a year after assuming the charge, Cotton was awarded his B. D. degree from Emmanuel College.²³

Cotton Mather tells an interesting story concerning the decision to call Cotton to St. Botolph's.²⁴ Since the city government controlled the election of church officials, the city council voted on Cotton and the vote was a tie. To break the tie, the mayor voted, but mistakenly voted in favor of Cotton when he intended to vote against him. The

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19. Loc. cit.

20. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 422.

21. Walker, TNEL, 58.

22. Thompson, HAB, 17. The 262-foot tower of the church can be seen 40 miles at sea. Young, CFP, 49n.

23. Venn and Venn, AC, Part I, Vol. I, 403.

24. Mather, MCA, I, 257.

mayor asked for a new vote and it was granted. However, the mayor repeated his mistake and Cotton was elected by the hand that sought to defeat him. The mayor asked for a third ballot, and it was denied. The interesting and plausible suggestion has been made that the mayor was playing politics, that he really wanted Cotton elected but pretended he did not to please the opposite party.²⁵ Or maybe capable men shunned public office then too.

Anyway there was still another obstacle to be surmounted before Cotton could officially take charge of the parish--the bishop. St. Botolph's was a big church, and John Cotton was a young man; too young, the bishop thought, for the task.²⁶ At least that is the reason he gave for his opposition. Cotton Mather says the real reason was that the bishop understood the young minister was "infected with Puritanism."²⁷ But there are ways of persuading even a bishop to change his mind--or there were in the seventeenth century.

Some of Mr. Cotton's Boston friends, understanding that one Simon Bibby, was to be spoken with, which was near to the Bishop, they presently charmed him; and so the business went on smooth, and Mr. Cotton was a learned man with the Bishop, and he was admitted into the place after the manner in those days.²⁸

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- 25. Hoppin, Art. (1862), 162.
- 26. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 422.
- 27. Mather, MCA, I, 257.
- 28. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 423.

Professor Williston Walker calls that affair "something very like bribery."²⁹ The author of the biography from which the extract is taken is less discreet. He freely admits that "Simon Biby" is that "which some call Simony and Bribery."³⁰ However, let it be said for John Cotton that he did not encourage the procedure; it was done "against his inclination."³¹ Although the phrase is ambiguous, it seems to imply that Cotton was aware of the action and did not approve of it.

Once he was settled in Boston, Cotton appears to have had personal problems of a spiritual nature; "he was exercised with some inward troubles which much dejected (him)."³² His biographer does not enlarge on the statement. Any minister knows something of dejection the first year of his pastorate, when large hopes are transformed into small results, and he finds his preaching does not pack the church, and after a few weeks he finds himself with nothing left to say. Of course, that experience may have been foreign to John Cotton. His inner turmoil may have been the result of trying to decide what his position as a Puritan should be toward the ceremonies and ritual of the Church.

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29. Walker, TNEL, 59.

30. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 423n.

31. Mather, MCA, I, 257.

32. Pond (ed.), MJC, 24.

Again, his "inward troubles" may have been an affair of the heart. The beginning of his second year in Boston he married Elizabeth Horrocks, the sister of a noted Puritan minister.³³ Other men have been troubled before marriage, questioning its advisability--and some have been troubled afterwards, too. It is, perhaps, significant that the troubled waters of his soul were quieted on his wedding day, and he was wont to say often later in his life: "God made that day, a day of double marriage to me!"³⁴

His wife proved to be a real helpmate. The women of the parish were attracted to her, unburdening their hearts before her, and she in turn informed her husband of the trials and difficulties of his parishioners. These insights into his people's lives "occasioned him in his public ministry more particularly and profitably to discourse those things that were of everlasting benefit."³⁵

The first year of parish work saw Cotton indulge in a defense of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination against Lutheran Arminianism.³⁶ His opponent was Dr. Peter Baron, a Boston physician, who moved in good society and wasted his substance at festive banquets promulgating his belief in the freedom of the human will. Cotton was reluctant at

33. Ellis, HFC, 29.

34. Mather, MCA, I, 258.

35. Mather, MCA, I, 258.

36. Pond (ed.), MJC, 36.

first to take part in argument, because of his youth. Gradually, however, he learned by listening where the strength and weakness of his opponent lay, and he determined to take up the cudgel against him.

In his own words he tells us:

And then observing (by the strength of Christ) how to avoid such expression as gave him any advantage in the expression of others, I began publickly to preach, and in private meetings to defend the doctrine of God's eternal election, before all foresight of good or evil, in the creature; and the redemption (ex gratia) only of the elect; the effectual vocation of a sinner, Per irresistibilem gratiae vim [By the irresistible power of Grace], without all respect of the preparation of free will; and finally, the impossibility of the fall of a sincere believer, either totally or finally, from a state of grace.³⁷

It is not hard to believe that by his efforts Cotton "undermined the foundations of Arminianism, those (who) disputed ceased, and in time Arminianism was no more pleaded for."³⁸ So well did he do his task, in fact, that several years later, Cotton was asked by neighboring ministers to clear their vision on the matter of predestination. The manuscript which he prepared for them was still in circulation thirty years later.³⁹

37. Mather, MCA, I, 258. Latin translation in Mather by Lucius F. Robinson.

38. Pond (ed.), MJC, 36.

39. Walker, TNEL, 62.

Although the first few years of his ministry in Boston went fairly well, in about 1615 Cotton's Puritan conscience began to bother him because "he could not digest the ceremonies."⁴⁰ This revolt against the Established ritual was the result of two provocations:

1. The significancy and efficacy put upon them [the ceremonies] in the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer, the second was the limitation of Church-power...to the observation of the Commandments of Christ, which made it appear to me utterly unlawfull for any Church power to enjoyn the observation of indifferent Ceremonies which Christ had not commanded.⁴¹

It was not long before his non-conformity put his ministry in jeopardy.⁴² Many of his parishioners followed him in his dissenting ways, but there were others who opposed him and complained to the bishop of his misdemeanor. Consequently, Cotton was "put [by the Episcopal court] under the circumstances of a silenced minister." During this period of enforced quiet, he came to church only at the time the sermon was to be delivered, purposely missing the "common prayers of the conformable." Mather goes on to say that Cotton was offered a "very great preferment" and his liberty in the ministry if he would just conform once.

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40. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 424.

41. Cotton, WCCC, 18, 19; quoted by Walker, TNEL, 64.

42. Details of this paragraph in Mather, MCA, I, 259.

Cotton refused and bore his silence without complaint.

After a while the man who informed against him was conscience-stricken, and he went to plead his case in court.⁴³ That man was Thomas Leverett, at that time an alderman of the Borough of Boston and later a ruling elder in Cotton's church in New England.⁴⁴ He took the case of his minister to a higher court than the one which had pronounced the sentence of silence. Armed with a good legal mind and a fine pair of gloves which he gave the proctor, Leverett swore that the defendant was a conformable man. Cotton was told he could return to his pulpit. One biographer states that Leverett swore "Mr. Cotton was a man conformable to the mind of the Lord."⁴⁵ If that is true, and Mather says much the same thing, then Mr. Leverett is almost left open to the charge of duplicity. The Court was interested in the clergy being conformable to the laws of the church, not "the mind of the Lord."

In 1621, prior to an Episcopal visitation, St. Botolph's Church was damaged by vandals, apparently Puritan vandals.⁴⁶ Stained glass in the church was broken, the walls were disfigured, monuments and statues were defaced.

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43. MacClure, LJC, 73.

44. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 424.

45. MacClure, LJC, 73.

46. Hoppin, Art.(1863).

There is no evidence that Cotton either encouraged or approved of such wanton destruction of property. He was a Puritan who cut up the ritual of his church; he would not harm her relics.

Nevertheless, later in the same year, Cotton was called again before his bishop, and he was asked to defend his reported refusal to kneel at communion.⁴⁷ There can be no doubt that the earlier disturbance had attracted the attention of Cotton's superiors and also the Puritan party in the church. In the course of the discussion, Cotton was asked to give a reason for his faith or to submit to the Established observances. After a few days of consideration the Boston Puritan replied in Latin formally with the following syllogism:

Cultus non-institutus non est acceptus
Genuflexio in perceptione Eucharistiae
est cultus non-institutus
Ergo, genuflexio non est acceptus.⁴⁸

After due deliberation this was accepted by the bishop and Cotton was reinstated.

47. Ibid. The facts of this paragraph from this source.

48. Uninstituted worship is not pleasing to God.
Kneeling at communion is uninstituted
Therefore, kneeling at communion is not pleasing to God.

(Translation by Nicholas Hoppin)

It is difficult to determine how far Cotton went in his non-conformity. In 1647 he wrote that he "forebore all the ceremonies alike at once."⁴⁹ However, many men in their age have a hazy remembrance of their youth, and Mr. Cotton seems to be no exception; for on January 31, 1624 he wrote a letter to Bishop Williams, then Bishop of Lincoln, in which states:

I have thus far gained (what by conference, what by study, what by seeking unto God) as of late to see the weakness of some of these grounds against kneeling which before I esteemed too strong for me to dissolve...I justly suspect that spirit in myself, or in another that breatheth a notion different from the rest of the members of a body of the Church of God.⁵⁰

He goes on to affirm that the use of the ring in marriage and standing at the reading of the creed are performed by himself. His assistant used the surplice, made the sign of the cross at baptism and knelt at communion. He denies that others come from neighboring parishes to take communion standing. He explains that if some in his church receive communion standing, it is only due to "the number of communicants, who often so throng one another in this great congregation that they can hardly stand (much less kneel), one by another."

49. Cotton, WCCC, 18; quoted in Walker, TNEL, 64.

50. Mead, Art.(1707).

Whiting tells us that Bishop Williams so admired Cotton that he spoke warmly to the King himself about the Boston minister, and the King consented that, despite his non-conformity, his ministry should not be interrupted.⁵¹ Not knowing this, Samuel Ward, Puritan pastor at Ipswich, complained:

Of all the men in the world I envy Mr. Cotton of Boston most; for he doth nothing in way of conformity, and yet hath his liberty, and I do everything that way and cannot enjoy mine.⁵²

That is an example of seventeenth century wit, and also contemporary testimony to the fact of Cotton's non-conformance and the unusual degree of tolerance accorded him.

While there were some things that he refused to do, there was one act he seems to have performed at every opportunity--and that is to preach. His pulpit labors were immense, in fact, staggering. Preaching was an important part of Puritanism, and John Cotton did his share.

In his twenty years at Boston on Sunday mornings "he preached over the first six chapters of the Gospel of John, the whole Book of Ecclesiastes, the Prophecy of Zephaniah, and many other Scriptures."⁵³ The Lord's Supper was usu-

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51. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 462.

52. Ibid., 427.

53. The facts in this paragraph and the next are from *ibid.*, 424, 425.

ally served every month and at that time Cotton preached on I Corinthians 11, the whole of II Chronicles 30, or some other scripture pertaining to the Lord's Supper. Sunday afternoons he "went over thrice the whole body of divinity in a catechistical way."

On Thursday afternoons, his lecture day, "he preached through the whole 1st and 2d Epistles of John, the whole book of Solomon's Song," and the parables of Jesus as in the first half of Matthew, comparing them with Mark and Luke. In spite of all this, the demand for the preached word exceeded the supply, and Cotton was compelled to lecture Wednesday and Friday early in the morning and Saturday afternoon at three. If the modern preacher has a parish which demands two sermons a week, he finds it an almost impossible task. It should be said, though, that Mr. Cotton had an assistant who lightened his load the latter years of his English pastorate. Besides this regular schedule of weekly preaching, Cotton also preached on election day, on the day the mayor was installed in office, and at the funerals "of those of the abler sort that died."

Notable, too, was his ministry to students. His house was full of students who had come to study with him, some of them from as far away as Germany.⁵⁴ The majority,

54. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 425.

however, came from Cambridge at the behest of Dr. Preston of Emmanuel College. It will be remembered that Preston was converted by one of Cotton's sermons at Cambridge, so ever afterwards a close bond united them. Mather says Preston sent so many students to Cotton it was practically a proverb, "That Mr. Cotton was Dr. Preston's seasoning vessel."⁵⁵ Also, Cotton advised many by correspondence, answering numerous letters from far and near, "wherein were handled many difficult cases of conscience, and many doubts by him cleared to the greatest satisfaction."⁵⁷

In 1630 we first notice the interest of Cotton in those Puritans with whom he was to spend the last part of his life. This year Cotton preached a farewell sermon to Winthrop and his company, who were about to sail for New England.⁵⁸ Two Boston parishioners were leaders of the group and assistants to John Winthrop; they were Thomas Dudley and William Coddington.⁵⁹ The nature of the connection between Cotton and the Massachusetts Bay Company is not clear, although the fact that he preached the farewell sermon would indicate his sympathy with the venture.

55. Mather, MCA, I, 260.

56. Ibid., 261.

57. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 426.

58. Young, CFP, 126n; Mead, Art.(1907).

59. Young, CFP, 127.

There is even a hint that he was urged to accompany the pioneers.

Not long after Winthrop was elected Governor in 1629, he sent the following letter to leading Puritan ministers, soliciting their support. There can be little doubt that Cotton received one of the letters. The letter reads:

Sir:

We conceit you may have heard of the resolution of diverse of us to engage our persons & estates in the planting a Colony in New England, for divers ends concerning the glory of God & the service of his Church: Unto the furthering of this worke we finde the Lorde strongely overwaying and enclining the spirits of many of his servants to offer themselves willingly unto him for this service; only we want hitherto able and sufficient Ministers to joyne with us in the worke ...Wherefore that we may in all things submit ourselves to be guided by the will of God in a worke of soe great importance, we resolve not to leave to our owne Wisdome the choyce of the men whom we desire for this worke, & for y^t cause earnestly request the assistance of divers godly Ministers to judge of the persons & corses of such of their brethren of the Ministry whom we shall desire to single out for this employ^t. We doe therefore earnestly desire, & in the name of God as you tender the furtherance of soe great a service, require your assistance for Counsell and direction in this weighty Cause: and entrete you for y^t purpose to afford us your presence in this City [London] the ninthe day of November, to joyne with such other of your brethren as we shall likewise request to be present heare att the same time for y^e same business...⁶⁰

The letter is dated October 27, 1629. While we have no evidence that Cotton attended the meeting in London, less than a month after he wrote the foregoing letter, Winthrop wrote his wife that Cotton might be an overnight guest.⁶¹ Perhaps Cotton was returning from an extended stay in London following the meeting, during which time Winthrop and the others endeavored to persuade him to go to New England with them. And perhaps Cotton could not see his way clear to leave England at that time but promised to preach the farewell sermon to the colonists. That is all conjecture. Nevertheless, Cotton did preach the sermon, bidding those who sailed not to forget those who stayed.

Forget not the wombe that bare you,
and the brest that gave you sucke. Even
ducklings, hatched under a henne, though
they take the water, yet will still have
recourse to the wing that hatched them:
how much more should chickens of the same
feather and yolke.⁶²

Not only did Cotton preach a farewell sermon to the intrepid Puritans leaving for the new land; in October, 1630 he sent three gold pieces to Herbert Pelham with instructions that he buy some supplies and send them to

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61. Winthrop, LLJW, I, 365.

62. Cotton, GPP, 18.

William Coddington in New England.⁶³ Pelham was later treasurer of Harvard College. This was not the sole extent of Cotton's benevolences toward the Massachusetts Bay Company; under the account of John Winthrop, Junior for 1631 is recorded another gift from Mr. Cotton of Boston.⁶⁴

The fall of 1630 Cotton was taken by ague and forced to forsake his pulpit for a year.⁶⁵ He went to live with the Earl of Lincoln. Before the year had passed, Cotton had recovered his health but he had lost his wife. In April, 1632 he married Sarah Story, a widow.⁶⁶

Cotton's decision to stay in Boston may be regarded as the triumph of hope over experience. He had been bothered in the past because of his non-conformity; still, a friendly bishop and a lenient king gave him hope of immunity from any restrictions laid on his ministry. The year of his second marriage saw the death of that hope; for "he had many enemies at Boston, as well as many friends."⁶⁷

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63. The letter is printed in Mitchell (ed.), WP, II, 315, 316.

64. Forbes (ed.), WP, III, 6.

65. MacClure, LJC, 82. Possibly it was the High Commission and not the ague that forced Cotton from his pulpit. See Bradford, PP, 114n, 115n.

66. Ellis, HFC, 29.

67. Whiting, in Young, CFP, 427.

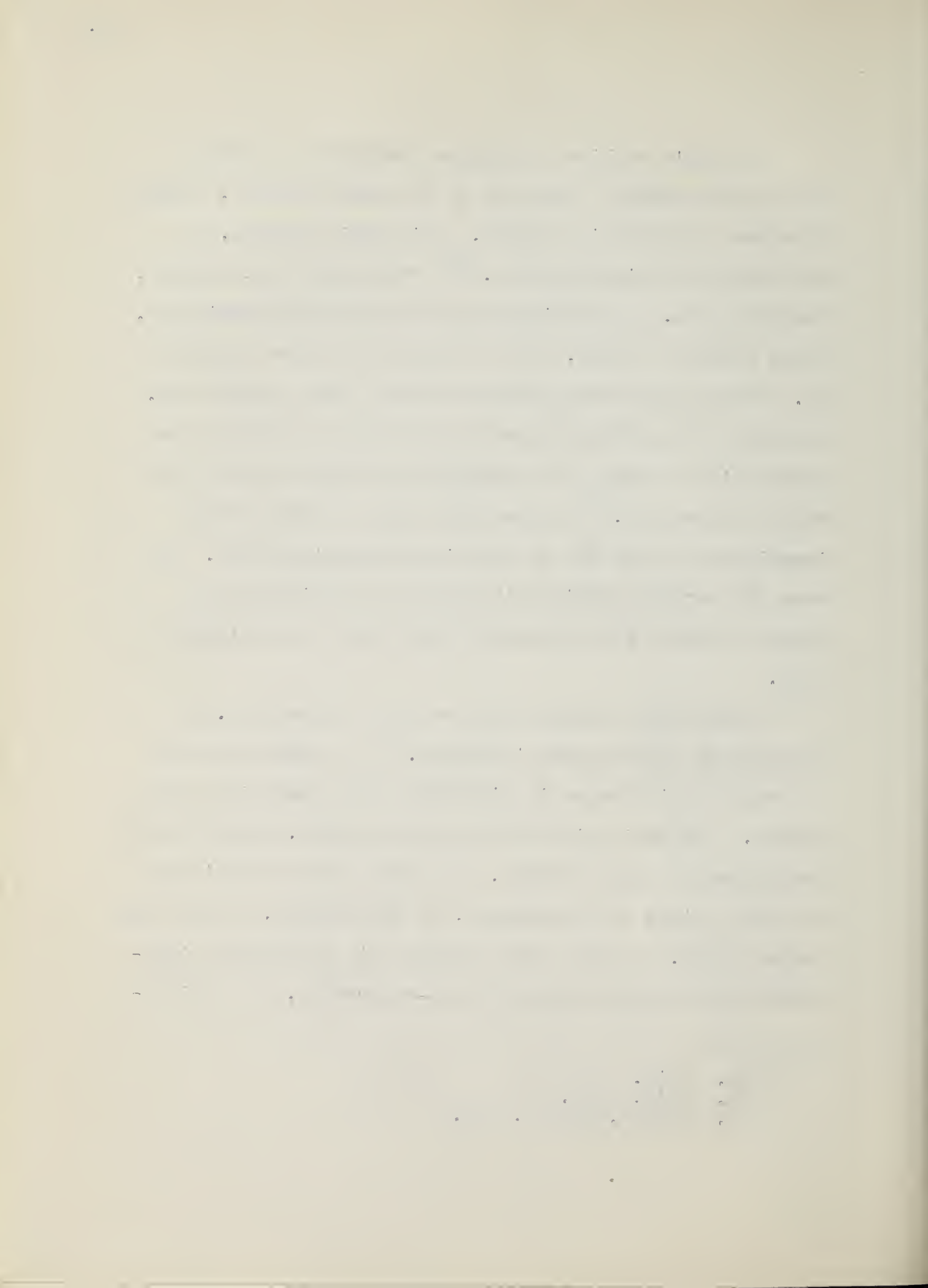
Cotton's earliest biographer delights in telling that of his enemies "they all of them were blasted, either in names, or in their estates, or in their devices, or else came to untimely deaths."⁶⁸ That may be so, however, there was one, "a profligate fellow and filthy fornicator, Gowen Johnson by name," who was able to do some damage to Mr. Cotton before the inexorable moral order crushed him. He swore to the High Commission Court that at Boston the people did not kneel at communion nor observe some of the other observances.⁶⁹ Steps were taken to bring Cotton immediately to the bar of the High Commission Court. To keep the records straight it should be mentioned that Johnson died of the plague not long after his dastardly deed.

When Cotton learned that he was a wanted man, he fled Boston and traveled incognito.⁷⁰ He asked the Earl of Dorset to intercede in his behalf and clear him of the charge. The Earl tried but was unsuccessful, for he found Laud blocking every attempt. He wrote Cotton that if he had been guilty of drunkenness, or uncleanness, or any such lesser fault, he could have obtained his pardon; but inasmuch as he had been guilty of non-conformity, and Puritan-

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid., 428.

70. Mather, MCA, I, 262.



ism, the crime was unpardonable. His advice to Cotton, therefore, was, "Fly for your safety."⁷¹

This Cotton did. He went "under a changed name and garb" to a port, presumably on the East coast of England, with the intention of sailing for Holland, but a relative persuaded him to go to London. In London he preached privately and bolstered the faith of fainting Puritans by his arguments for non-conformity. John Davenport, later a New England leader, and several other ministers sought Cotton's counsel.⁷² That Cotton was widely known among the churchmen of his time is implied by Davenport. He writes: "The reason of our desire to confer with him... was our former knowledge of his approved godliness, excellent learning, sound judgment, etc."⁷³

At this time, Cotton wrote his wife a touching letter, from which we print the first paragraph.

If our heavenly Father be pleased to make our yoke more heavy than we did so soon expect, remember (I pray thee,) what we have heard, that our heavenly husband, the Lord Jesus, when he first called us to fellowship with himself, called us unto this condition,

71. Mather, MCA, I, 263, 264. Next paragraph based on this.

72. Davenport's account of the visit is printed in Pond (ed.), MJC, 61-63. Davenport was later tried before Laud for non-conformity. Mayo, Art.(1933) 443.

73. Pond (ed.), MJC, 62.

to deny ourselves and to take up our cross daily and follow him. And truly sweet heart, though this cup may be brackish at the first taste, yet a cup of God's mingling is doubtless sweet in the bottom to such as have learned to make it their greatest happiness to partake with Christ, as in his glory, so in the way that leadeth to it.⁷⁴

Cotton goes on to tell his wife that he is "very fitly and welcomely accomodated" and in a very husbandly fashion requests his wife to "send me now by this bearer such linen as I am to use."

There were three possible retreats for Cotton: Holland, Barbadoes and New England. About the time Cotton was preaching his farewell sermon to the Winthrop fleet, Thomas Hooker, later one of the founders of Connecticut, was leaving England for Holland.⁷⁵ He was there about three years, and near the end of his stay he wrote Cotton a letter, giving a sorry picture of religion in Holland. He said in part:

The state of these provinces to my weak eye, seems wonderfully ticklish and miserable. For the better part, heart religion, they content themselves with very forms, though much blemished; but the power of godliness, for ought I can see or hear, they know not; and if it were thoroughly pressed, I fear least it will be fiercely opposed.⁷⁶

74. Reprinted in Young, CFP, 432,3.

75. Mather, MCA, I, 338.

76. Quoted in ibid., 340.

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1. The evolution of man: a review of the evidence
2. The evolution of man: a review of the evidence
3. The evolution of man: a review of the evidence

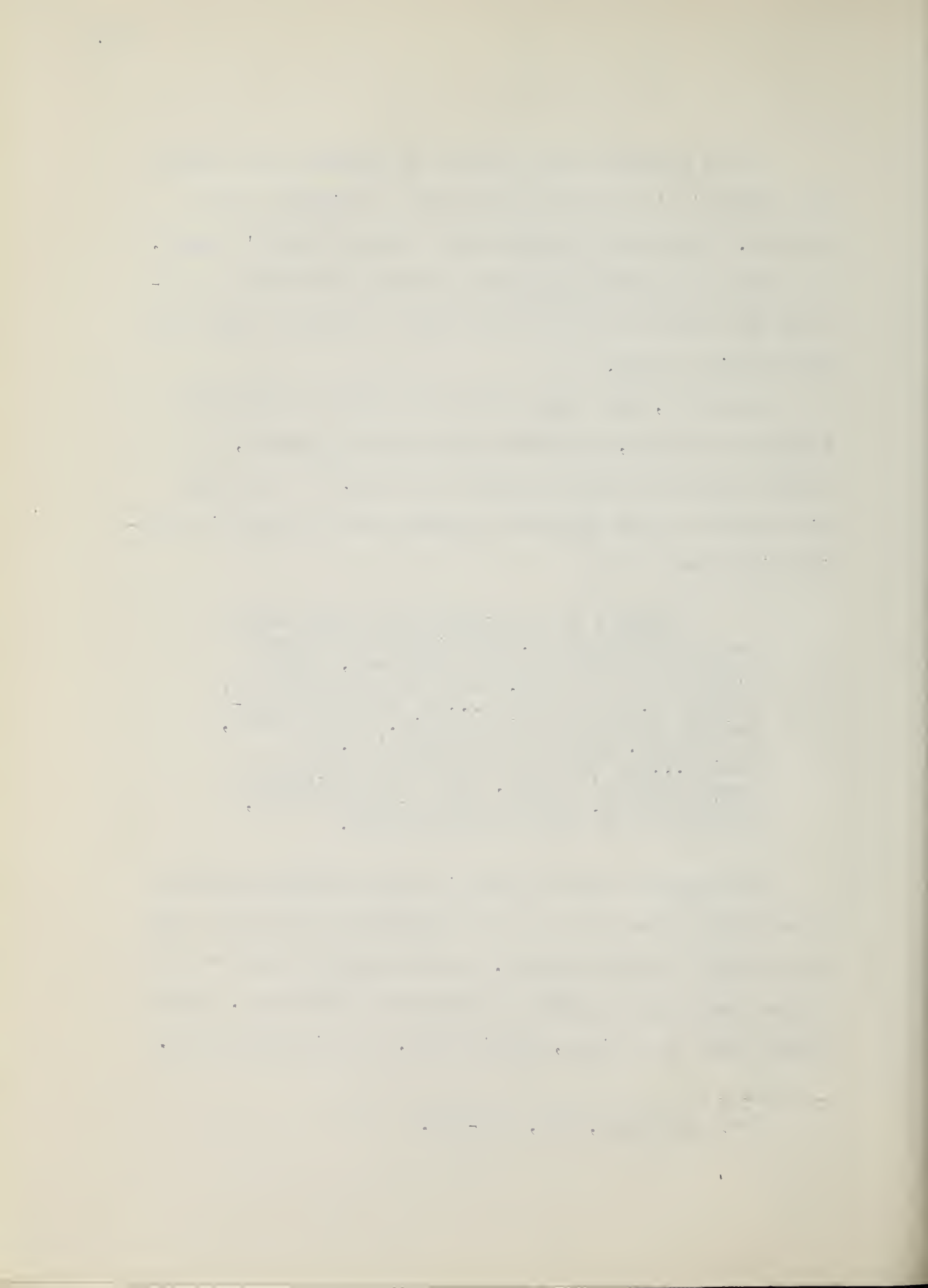
It is possible that Cotton corresponded with Hooker and asked him if Holland would make a desirable spot to flee to. The letter Mather quotes may be Hooker's reply. No doubt a continued exchange of letters led both to conclude New England was the best place to go; for they were soon to sail there.

On May 7, 1633 John Cotton sat down and wrote the bishop of Lincoln, resigning his charge at Boston, "a remote corner of your Lordship's diocese."⁷⁷ He thanks his bishop for his Christian courtesy and patience in bearing with him:

Though I do unfeignedly and deservedly honor your Lordship, and highly esteem many hundreds of other reverend divines, great lights of the Church, (in comparison of whom, what am I, poor spark?)...yet in things pertaining to God and his worship, still I must, as I ought, live by mine own faith, not theirs...and freely to resign my place unto your Lordship's hands. For I see neither my bodily health, nor the peace of the Church, will now stand with my continuance.

We can well believe that it was with great secrecy that Cotton made his way to the Downs from which his ship was to sail for New England. Cotton Mather tells us that Thomas Hooker was hounded to the house of the Rev. Samuel Stone where an officer, seeking him, was directed by Mr.

77. In Young, CFP, 434-437.



Stone elsewhere.⁷⁸ Neither Cotton nor Stone admitted to those on board the ship that they were preachers "till they were got so far into the main ocean, that they might with safety discover who they were."⁷⁹ Winthrop says in his Journal: "They gat out of England with much difficulty, all places being belaid to have taken Mr. Cotton & Mr. Hooker, who had been long sought for to have been brought into the High Commission."⁸⁰

The following year in a letter which Young thinks was sent either to John Davenport, Richard Mather, or Thomas Shepard, Cotton gave three reasons for leaving Old England for New England.⁸¹ 1. God closed the door of service in England and opened it in New England, and "Who are we that we should strive against God...If we may and ought to follow God's calling three hundred miles, why not three thousand miles?" 2. He had been persuaded by friends that it was better "for themselves, and for me, and for the church of God, to withdraw myself from the present storm." 3. There was greater religious liberty in New England.

We durst not so far be wanting to
the grace of Christ and to the necessity

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78. Mather, MCA, I, 340.

79. Ibid., 341.

80. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 106.

81. Printed in Young, CFP, 438-444.

of our own souls, as to set down somewhere else, under the shadow of some ordinances, where by two months travel we might come to enjoy the liberty of all.

The Griffin sailed early in July of 1633.⁸² On the trip over the nearly two hundred passengers enjoyed "a Puritan feast of preaching."⁸³ Mr. Cotton had the first chance in the morning, Mr. Hooker served up the Word in the afternoon, and Mr. Stone rounded off the day after the evening meal with a third homiletical effort.⁸⁴

Thus there came across the Atlantic the Griffin, "A ship which, in those three worthies, brought from Europe a richer loading than the richest that ever sailed back from America in the Spanish Flota."⁸⁵ At least that is what Cotton Mather thought; John Cotton was his grandfather.

82. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 105.

83. Walker, TNEL, 68.

84. Mather, MCA, I, 265.

85. Ibid., 434.

CHAPTER III

JOHN COTTON IN NEW ENGLAND

On September 4, 1633 the Griffin sailed into Boston Harbor.¹ Certain colonial wits said that in the coming of the ship God had supplied them with their three great necessities--"Cotton for their clothing, Hooker for their fishing and Stone for their building."² At least there was one on board who was going to do his utmost to clothe them in righteousness and build up their colony along theocratic principles, and that one was John Cotton.

There is the possibility that Boston was named in honor of John Cotton. A century ago this contention was commonly accepted.³ Justin Winsor in the Memorial History of Boston, however, discards the idea and holds that more probably the town was named because of the preponderance of men from Lincolnshire in the settling party.⁴ Winsor quotes a letter from Thomas Dudley to the Countess of Lincoln in which Dudley states that the first settlement "we named Boston (as we intended to have done) the first place

1. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 105.
2. Mather, MCA, I, 265.
3. See MacClure, LJC, 13; and Pond (ed.), MJC, 4n.
4. Winsor (ed.), MHB, I, 88-9.

we resolved on," and Winsor is impressed by the silence of Dudley as to why Boston was so named.⁵

It is true that the contemporary observers are very quiet about why Boston got its name, but history is filled with strange silences. The records of the Court of Assistants of the Massachusetts Bay read under the date of September 7, 1630: "It is ordered that Trimountaine shall be called Boston, Mattapan Dorchester, & the towne upon Charles River Watertown."⁶ The letter of Dudley to the Countess of Lincoln and the records of the Court of Assistants are the only places we can go to for the reason why Boston was so named, and they say nothing.

The next oldest testimony we have is in favor of Cotton; it comes from William Hubbard (1621-1704), one of the earliest historians of Massachusetts. Writing of the transfer of some of the colonists from Charlestown to what was to be Boston, he says:

But the chiefest part of the gentlemen made provision for another plantation on the neck of land on the south-side, the said river Charles (which afterward, on account of Mr. Cotton, was called Boston).⁷

5. Winsor (ed.), MHB, I, 88.
6. Shurtleff (ed.), RGCM, II, 4.
7. Hubbard, GHNE, 134.

Another valuable witness for Cotton is Increase Mather, who married Cotton's daughter, Maria. In an introduction to an account of John Cotton by Cotton Mather, Increase writes:

Although I had little of personal acquaintance with Mr. Cotton, being a child not above thirteen years old when he died... my relation to his family since, has given me an opportunity to know many observable things concerning him. Both Bostons have reason to honour his memory; and New England-Boston most of all, which oweth its name and being to him, more than to anyone person in the world.⁸

As for the large number of men in the colony who came from Boston, Old England, a recent study has shown them to be by far in the minority: of the over four hundred passengers who came in the Winthrop fleet, only twelve are traceable to Lincolnshire. The great majority came from Suffolk, Essex, and London; the numbers from each place being 159, 92, and 78 respectively.⁹

Of the twelve men present at the meeting of the court which named Boston, only two, William Coddington and Simon Bradstreet were Lincolnshire men.¹⁰ Even more significant than the geographic affiliation is the fact that Bradstreet was the son of a non-conformist minister and a graduate of

8. Mather, MCA, I, 246.

9. Banks, TWF, 50f.

10. Lee (ed.), DNB, s.v.

Emmanuel College, Cambridge. There is a good possibility that he was an admirer of John Cotton. The last words nearly all of the members of the Court heard before they sailed from England some weeks earlier had been the words of Cotton's sermon to them. The sermon had impressed Codrington so much that when he got to New England, he told Samuel Fuller what Cotton's words concerning the Plymouth settlement had been.¹¹

The argument against Boston being named for Cotton is based solely on silence, and that is precarious evidence. "In neither of the letters from Southampton is there an allusion to the presence of John Cotton or to the sermon which he is said to have preached there."¹² So writes the biographer of John Winthrop; yet John Cotton was there, and he did preach. Surely the evidence allows the possibility that Boston was named with Cotton in mind with the hope that he might join the Massachusetts Bay Company.

When Cotton came to Boston, he came to a town that knew him even if it had not been named for him. The summer of 1630, while he was in the Massachusetts Colony, Samuel Fuller wrote William Bradford the interesting news which a boat from England had brought along with its cargo. He wrote:

11. Bradford, HPP, II, 116, 117.

12. Winthrop (ed.), LLJW, II, 379.

The Earl of Pembroke is dead, and Bishop Laud is Chancellor of Oxford; and that five sundry ministers are to appear before the High Commission, amongst whom, Mr. Cotton of Boston, is one.¹³

It seems probable that Fuller particularly mentions Cotton, because the officials of the Bay colony were more interested in Cotton than they were in the other four dissenting ministers. Cotton Mather states that when three years later John Cotton decided to come to Boston, "letters procured from the church of Boston, by Mr. Winthrop, the governor of the colony, had their influence in the matter."¹⁴

Whether they named their city in honor of him or not, we can readily understand why the Boston church should desire him to come to them. He was a well-known Puritan and a noted preacher. In the Puritan economy, preaching was very important, for Puritan doctrine was rooted and grounded in the Bible. Every Puritan preacher was a Biblical preacher, and his sermons were interlarded with quotations from the Word.

Cotton's power as a preacher is well-attested. In old Boston once

Wilst he was...handling the sixth commandment, the words of God which he

13. Bradford, HPP, II, 114n, 115n.

14. Mather, MCA, I, 265.

uttered were so quick and powerful, that a woman among his hearers, who had been married sixteen years to a second husband, now in horror of conscience openly confessed to her murdering her former husband, by poison, though thereby she exposed herself to the extremity of being burned.¹⁵

That was preaching which resulted in conviction of sin. His preaching seems always to have touched the hearts of men.

Cotton's sermonic efforts had been greatly appreciated in old Boston. For nine years from 1616 to 1625, according to the Records of the town Corporation, Mr. Cotton was given each year an additional ten pounds, "in respect that his living is very small, and his pains in preaching very great."¹⁶ In 1619 he was given an additional ten pounds "in consideration of his pains in preaching and catechizing."¹⁷ It is perhaps needless to say that a "painful preacher" in the seventeenth century was one who took pains in preparing his sermons, not one who gave pain by their delivery. The affection of his English parish followed him through the years. In 1650 Cotton dedicated his volume on The Holiness of Church-Members to his former parishioners and called to mind

- 15. Mather, MCA, I, 265.
- 16. Thompson, HAB, 414.
- 17. Loc. cit.

their kindnesses to him even after he had gone to New England.¹⁸ The suggestion is made that his former parishioners perhaps sent him gifts of money through the years.

One of these English parishioners, Matthew Swallow, in his preface to a volume of Cotton's sermons writes:

Very few that equalled him, scarce any that excelled him in the knowledge of the Arts and tongues...all his Sermons being either Meate to feede, or Medicine to heal his hearers.¹⁹

Cotton Mather tells of an instance when Cotton used skill to adapt his sermon to the needs of his hearers.²⁰ He had intended one Sunday to preach on Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me..." His theme was to be "living by faith in adversity." However, there appeared on the scene the Earl of Dorchester with a party of noblemen to see about draining some of the fen lands. "Considering that these noblemen were not much acquainted with afflictions, he altered his intentions," and he preached not on adversity, but on "living by faith in prosperity." His listeners were so pleased with what they heard that they

- 18. Cotton, HCM; referred to by Walker, TNEL, 63.
- 19. Cotton, GMM, 2.
- 20. Mather, MCA, I, 261.

promised to befriend him at Court, should he ever be in need. One may question the preacher's motives, but he was certainly not the first man to preach a sermon with his eye on an influential member of the congregation.

It may or may not have bearing on the question whether Boston was named for Cotton, but it is interesting that after their arrival in the new land, Cotton's fellow-preachers, Thomas Hooker and Samuel Stone went to Newtown, while Cotton stayed at Boston.²¹ The Saturday evening following his coming, at a meeting of the congregation of the Boston church, Cotton was requested to speak to the question of the evening which was "the church". This he did, showing from the Scriptures, (Canticles 6), that some churches were comparable to queens, others to concubines, some to doves and damsels. Perhaps because his discourse confirmed their already high opinion of him, the church invited him and his wife to become members.

The next day he and Mrs. Cotton were admitted into the church. At the service in the afternoon, Cotton preached, and his child, born on the voyage across the Atlantic, was baptized by Mr. Wilson, pastor of the church. The child was christened Seaborn. Cotton gave two reasons why he had not baptized the child on board ship. He ex-

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21. The following paragraphs are based on Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 107ff.

plained that sea water had been no barrier for it would have served as well as fresh water, but that first of all, there was no settled congregation on the ship, and second, a minister has power to give the sacraments only in his own congregation. Cotton had made long strides toward Congregationalism. For it was Congregational polity that a church consisted of a gathered group of Christians who covenanted with God to worship him and walk his way.²² Therefore, while Cotton's fellow passengers were Christian, they did not comprise a church. It was also Congregational polity that the minister's power to administer the sacraments was derived from the church of which he was minister. From the Congregational view point, Cotton, having resigned his English charge, was powerless to perform any ministerial function.

About two weeks after the docking of the Griffin Governor Winthrop and his Council met at Boston in a joint meeting with the ministers and elders of all the churches, who had been summoned to consider what to do with Mr. Cotton. His advent had caused a stir, several communities wanted him as their minister, and the problem of who was

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22. See Miller, OM, 170,171. "The covenant served the church much as a hoop serves a barrel. It was as impossible to have a church without a covenant, as it is impossible to have a barrel without a hoop."

Park, Art.(1910), 84.

to have him had to be settled. There were those who wanted him to settle where his parishioners could keep cattle. However, Governor Winthrop records that "it was agreed, by full consent, that the fittest place for him was Boston."²³

There is a slight chance that Boston was considered the place for him because of his connection with its name. More likely, though, the choice was due to Boston's being the seat of the colony and the residence of most of the colony's chief inhabitants. Even at this early date it was "the Hub". It was first thought by the Council that since he would be giving public lectures during the week, Cotton should be paid partially from the public treasury. On second thought the motion was defeated.

Within less than a month, on October 10, 1633, John Cotton was chosen teacher of the congregation of the Boston church. At the same time, his friend and English parishioner, Thomas Leverett, was chosen a ruling elder. In accepting the call to leadership of the church, which was put to him by the pastor, Mr. Cotton said:

That howsoever he knew himself unworthy and unsufficient for that place; yet, having observed all the passages of God's providence, (which he reckoned up in particular) in calling him to it, he could not but accept it.²⁴

23. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 108.

24. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 110.

Then the pastor and two elders laid their hands on his head, and he was made the teacher of the Boston church, a position he was to maintain for nineteen years.

Probably Cotton would have been elected pastor, had not the church already one in the person of John Wilson. The offices of "pastor" and "teacher" signified a distinction in early New England church life which later passed away. The Cambridge Platform of 1648 thus defines their functions: "The Pastor's special work is, to attend to exhortation: & therein to Administer a word of Wisdom: the Teacher is to attend to Doctrine, & therein to Administer a word of Knowledge."²⁵

Both pastor and teacher were allowed to administer the sacraments and also "to execute the Censures" which seems to be a censorious type of preaching based on the Bible. The distinction in duties was at first maintained. In the case of Anne Hutchinson, while her trial seemed to revolve around heresy, Cotton was the prosecutor, but when her testimony led her hearers to believe she was lying, then John Wilson took Cotton's place. The difference between their duties, however, was too fine and the expense of supporting two ministers too great in communities whose size made it possible for one man to do the work, "that

with the death of the first generation of ministers the distinction speedily ceased to be observed."²⁶

No one can deny that John Cotton was well-qualified for the job of teacher. He had spent most of his mature life grappling with the Scriptures in order to wrest more light out of God's Holy Word. Prior to sailing to America, when he was in London arguing with some of his conforming colleagues, they were duly impressed that his defense of non-conformity was accomplished "without the help of any book but the Scriptures, wherein he was mighty."²⁷

In May 1636 Hugh Peter, preaching in Boston, requested the Boston church

That they would spare their teacher, Mr. Cotton, for a time, that he might go through the Bible, and raise marginal notes upon all the knotty places of the scriptures.²⁸

If there was one man in the Massachusetts Bay equipped for the task of untying Scriptural knots, John Cotton was that man. Although his modesty prevented him from boasting, in a private conversation with a friend he had remarked, "That he knew not of any difficult place in all the whole

26. Walker, HCC, 226-7.

27. Pond (ed.), MJC, 62.

28. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 179.

Bible, which he had not weighed somewhat unto satisfaction."²⁹ There is the possibility, of course, that he weighed some passages and was satisfied that he could make nothing out of them.

Someone has remarked that though we may quarrel with the theology of their sermons, we must admit that the Puritans were able to pick appropriate texts. Cotton was no exception; he always had a ready text. When he preached on "God's Promise to His Plantation" to the Winthrop party sailing to America, he chose as his text II Sam. 7:10: "Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more."³⁰ When Governor Winthrop was sick, a fast day was proclaimed and Cotton preached on Psalm 35:13: "When they were sick, I humbled myself with fasting; I behaved myself as though he had been my friend and brother."³¹ When a young woman killed her infant, born out of wedlock, Cotton endeavored to bring her to repentance by preaching on Ezekiel 16:20: "Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain my children."³² One would almost think the Biblical writers

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- 29. Mather, MCA, I, 274.
- 30. Cotton, GPP.
- 31. Mather, MCA, I, 130.
- 32. Mather, MCA, II, 405.

wrote with the seventeenth century event in mind.

At any rate his knowledge of the Bible was singular enough to cause Benjamin Woodbridge to write in verse of Cotton as

A living, breathing Bible; tables where
both covenants, at large, engraven were
Gospel and law, in's heart, had each its
column;
His head an index to the sacred volume;
His very name a title-page; and next
His life a commentary on the text.³³

One would nearly be compelled to live and breathe the Bible if he were going to cover as much of it in public discourse as Cotton did. His grandson tells us that he preached and lectured from the Bible for nineteen years in America, much as he had done in his English parish. No doubt he repeated many of the sermons he had given in England. In the course of the years anyway, he went over "in an expository way... the Old Testament once, and a second time as far as the thirteenth chapter of Isaiah;" the New Testament he covered once, and on the second trip through he got as far as the
34
eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

Cotton Mather appears to distinguish between going over scriptural passages "in an expository way" and preaching; for he writes that on Sundays and lecture-days Cotton

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33. Quoted in *ibid.*, I, 284.

34. *Ibid.*, I, 271.



preached through the Acts of the Apostles; the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, the books of Ezra, the Revelation, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, second and third Epistles of John, the Epistle to Titus, both Epistles to Timothy; the Epistle to the Romans; with innumerable other scriptures on incidental occasions.³⁵

The italics are mine. Some modern preachers have not even read certain of those books, much less preached clear through them, verse by verse.

Mather pays Cotton a great tribute by saying he was able "to meet every remarkable occasion with pertinent reflections...without ever wandering out of sight of the text."³⁶ Which is a considerable achievement. Many moderns triumph in the matter by not having any text to begin with.

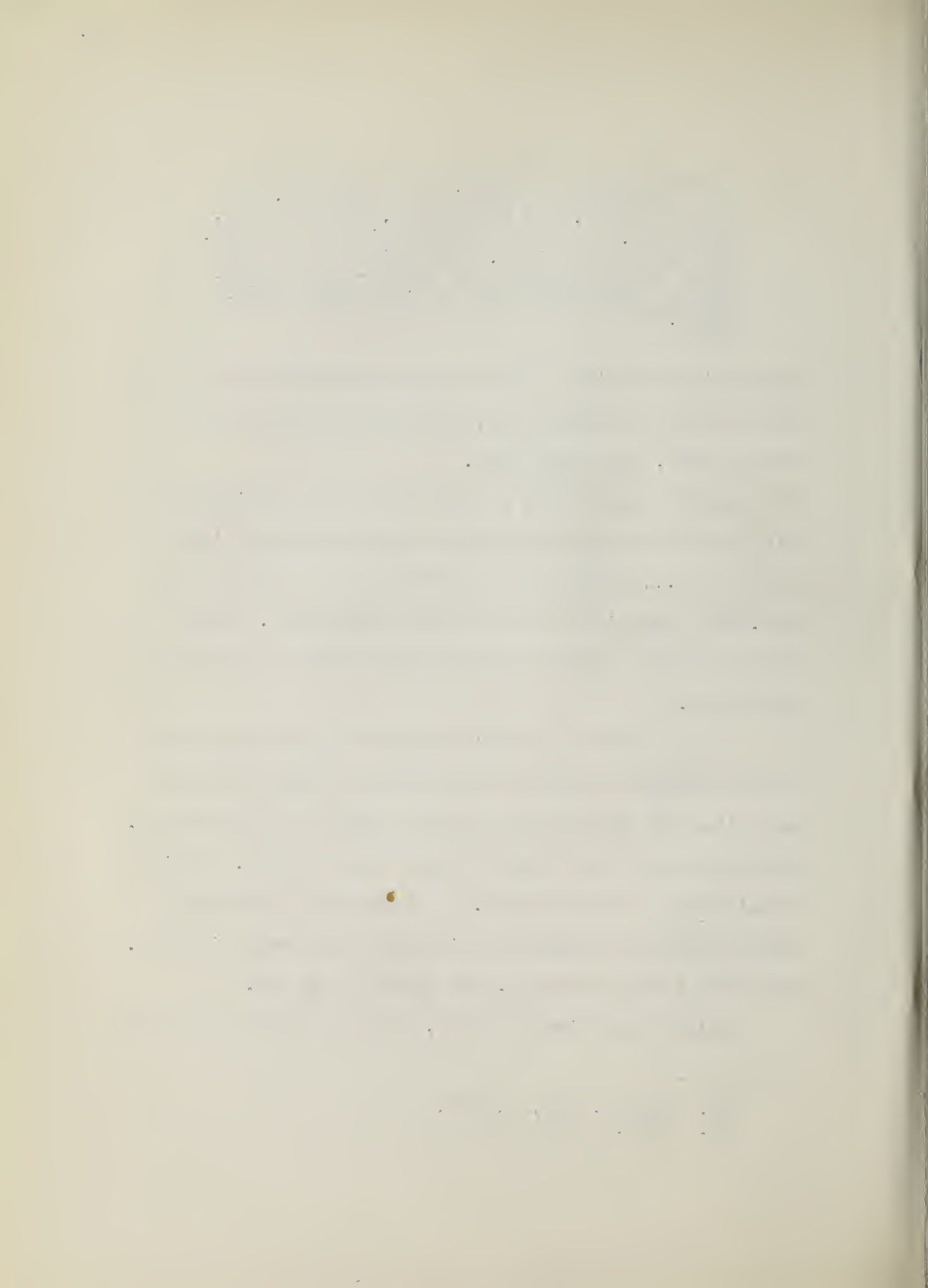
In his sermon on "God's Promise to His Plantation" Cotton manages to quote a full score of other Biblical books than the particular one from which he is preaching. One does not do that without more than a casual, nodding acquaintance with the Bible. It takes more than a few public moments on Sunday morning when the lesson is read. One needs to be a scholar, and John Cotton was.

Study takes time and toil, as only one who has never

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35. Mather, MCA, I, 271.

36. Ibid.



done it can doubt. As one of Cotton's early biographers, John Norton, put it:

The earth continueth barren or worse,
except industry be its Mid-wife. The Hen
which bringeth not forth without incessant
sitting night and day is an apt embleme of
students.³⁷

Cotton did much "incessant sitting."

He rose early and in his latter days forewent supper, turning his "former supping-time into a reading, a thinking, a praying time."³⁸ And when he was asked why he studied more at night than he had formerly done, he replied, "Because I love to sweeten my mouth with a piece of Calvin before I go to sleep." Twelve hours a day was what he commonly studied, and he called that "a scholar's day." He was so often in his study and so seldom in his parish that he depended much on his ruling elders "to inform him concerning the state of his particular flock." But then the teacher of the church was not supposed to be the parish minister; that was the pastor's job. God had more light behind his Holy Word, but it took a lot of time and trouble to push the words apart and let the light shine through.

37. Pond (ed.), MJC, 51.

38. The facts in this paragraph are in Mather, MCA, I, 273-76.



Although he felt he could serve God best in the study, Cotton never refused to see anyone who came to visit him. But he would often say after his visitor had departed, "I would rather have given this man a handful of money, than have been kept this long out of my study."³⁹ Pastoral counselling was an aspect of the ministry for which he had no sympathy, because he felt he had no time.

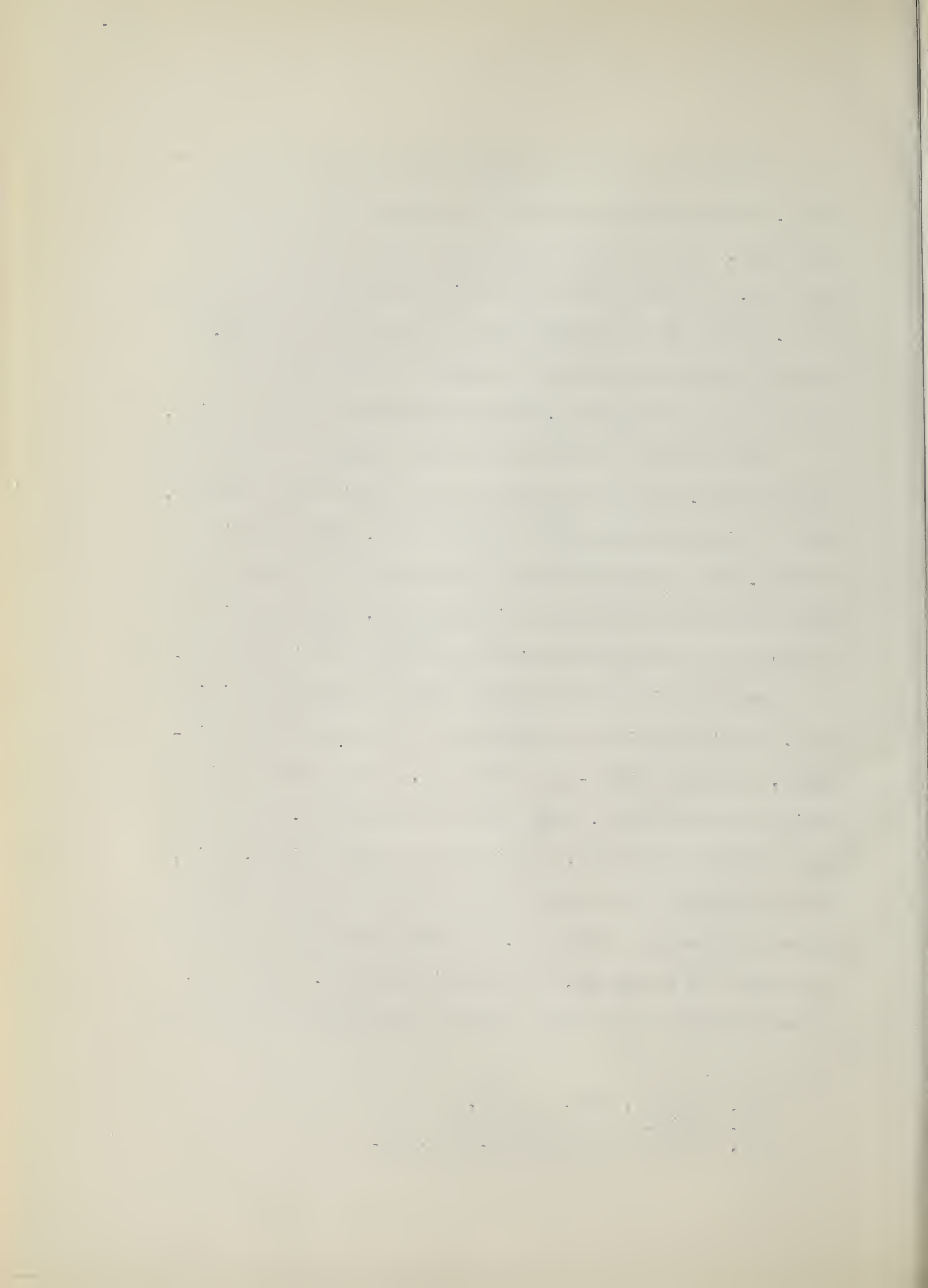
The result of such an assiduous pursuit of knowledge was that "Mr. Cotton was indeed a most universal scholar, and a living system of the liberal arts, and a walking library."⁴⁰ Family pride may have entered a little into that grandiose estimate by his grandson, yet there is warrant for holding Cotton's scholarship in high regard.

Besides his extraordinary skill in "Textual Divinity", or his ability to expound and interpret the Scriptures, he was a first-rate linguist. Like most of his ministerial brothers, John Cotton knew Hebrew, that language which John Eliot, missionary to the Indians, said, "It pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to make use of when he spake from heaven unto Paul."⁴¹ John Cotton not only read and wrote the language, he spoke it as well. His knowledge of Greek was so keen that he was able to ferret out

39. Mather, MCA, I, 275.

40. Ibid.

41. Quoted by MacClure, LJC, 16.



errors in the interpretations of the Church Fathers.⁴²

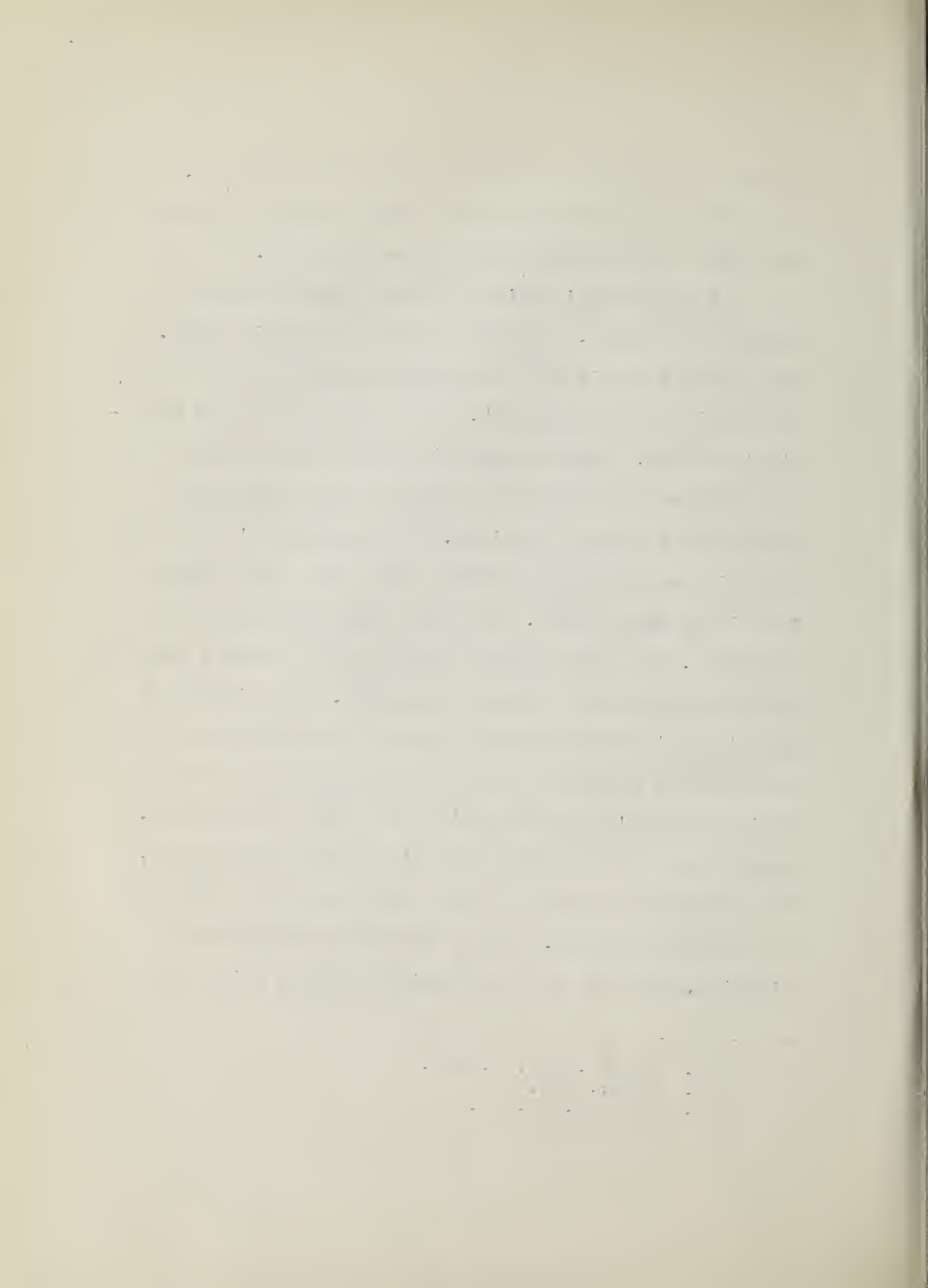
Latin he spoke and wrote "with a most Ciceronian elegance"⁴³
and seems to have published a volume in Latin.

It was Cotton's skill in these languages which brought him reputation, not the mere fact of knowing them. Any educated man in the seventeenth century in New England had studied those languages, even though he was not proficient in them. Every student in Harvard that century had to study Greek and Hebrew as many of the founders had studied them at Old Cambridge.⁴⁴ The students' knowledge of Latin was taken for granted; they would have learned that in grammar school. Not only those intending to be ministers, but every Harvard student had to have a general understanding of the ancient languages. The aim was to make intelligent Christian laymen of the students; to enable them to return to the original language to verify their preacher's interpretation of a text if necessary. Toward this end of making them discerning parishioners, the students were made to study and analyze the Bible in the original tongues, study a handbook of Protestant divinity, and take notes on Puritan sermons twice every

42. Mather, MCA, I, 273.

43. Ibid., 274.

44. Morison, PP, 39.



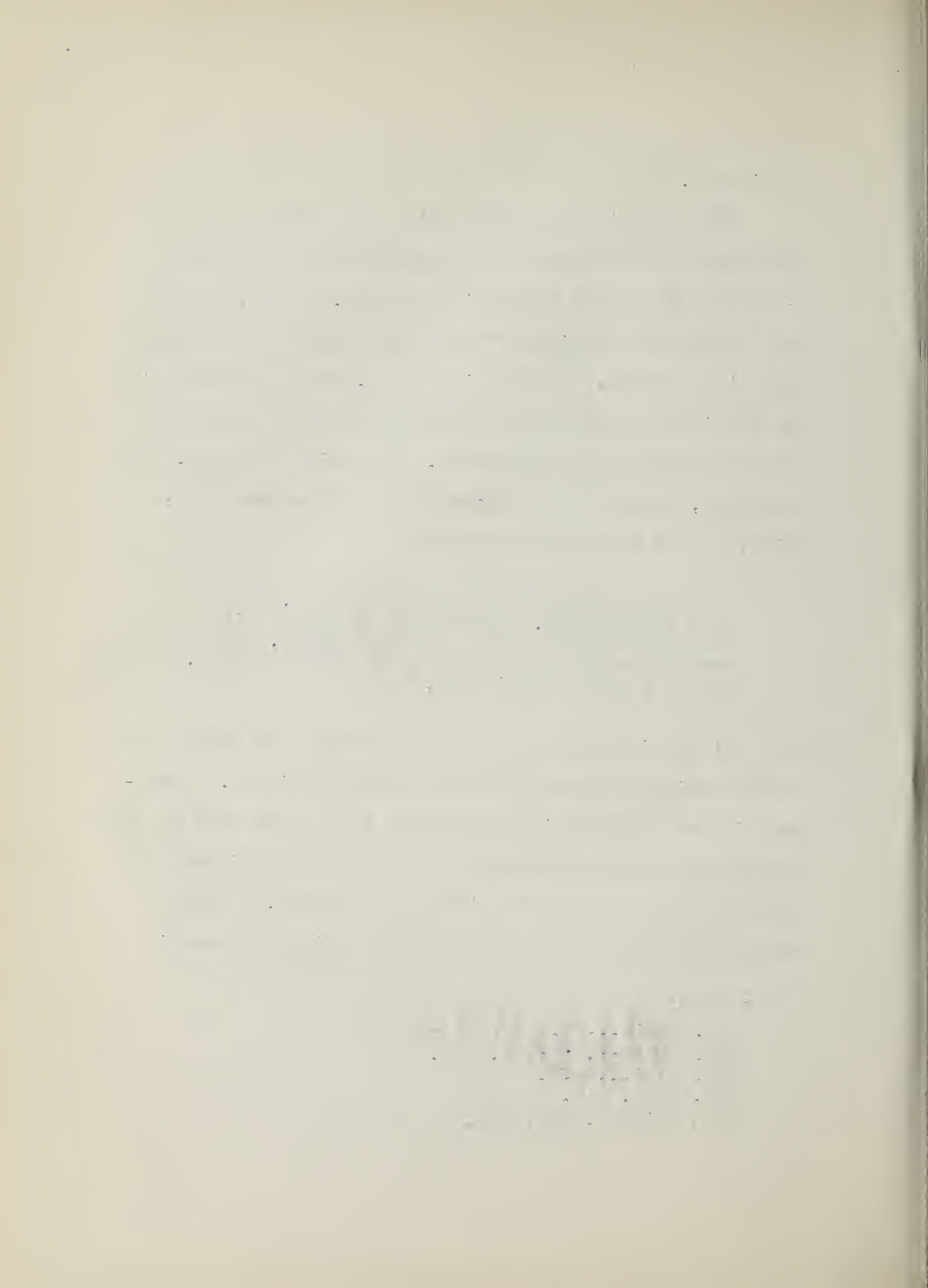
Lord's Day.⁴⁵

With all his linguistic skill John Cotton never cluttered up his sermon with languages other than English -- "he had the art of concealing his art." Also, he held with other noted Puritans "That Latin for the most part was flesh in a sermon."⁴⁶ That is to say, most listeners did not receive much spiritual nourishment from Latin phrases which they could not understand. "I desire to speak," he would say, "so as to be understood by the meanest capacity."⁴⁷ He gave as his reason:

If I preach more scholastically, then only the learned, and not the unlearned will understand me; but if I preach plainly, then both learned and unlearned will understand me, and so I shall profit all.⁴⁸

It is difficult for us to understand the hunger for sermons which possessed the New England Puritans. Governor Winthrop records in his Journal that there were so many lectures and church meetings by 1639 that they interfered with the normal course of life in the colony.⁴⁹ Many people went to two or three meetings during the week in

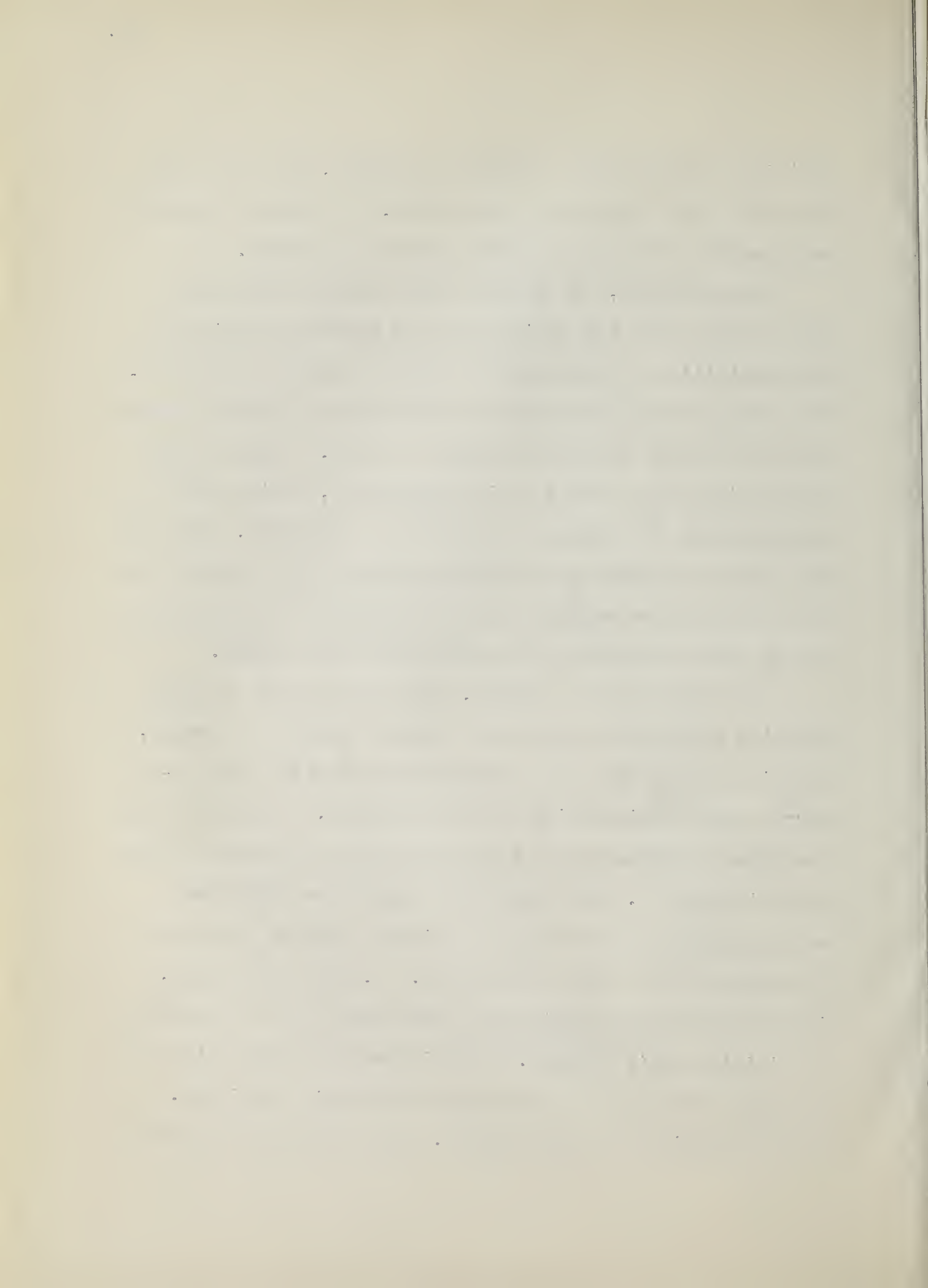
- 45. Ibid., 40.
- 46. Mather, MCA, I, 274.
- 47. Ibid., 275.
- 48. Loc. cit.
- 49. Miller, NEM, 298.



addition to the regular services on Sunday, and since the sessions often lasted till after dark, it worked a hardship on those who lived far from the places of meeting.

Consequently, the General Court ordered the ministers to meet with the magistrates and deputies to discuss the possibility of reducing the numerous church gatherings. The clergy were so disturbed by this request that the group expected to meet in Salem refused to do so. Those clergy who met in Boston voiced their disapproval, saying that if they lessened the number of lectures as requested, then the door might be opened to civilian control of the church; and they reminded the magistrates that freedom of preaching was one of the main reasons the colony had been founded.

The Court had to retreat, explaining to the clergy that its action had only been a request and not a command, that its request was not conclusive but desired the conference and consideration of the ministers. The matter was concluded in agreement by the magistrates and clergy to two propositions: 1. That the church assemblies might end early enough to allow those who lived a mile or two from the church to get home before dark. 2. That the clergy, if they were not satisfied that the Court had no intention of limiting their liberty, could inform the Court prior to its next session as to the reasons for their suspicion. If no communication was received, the Court would take for



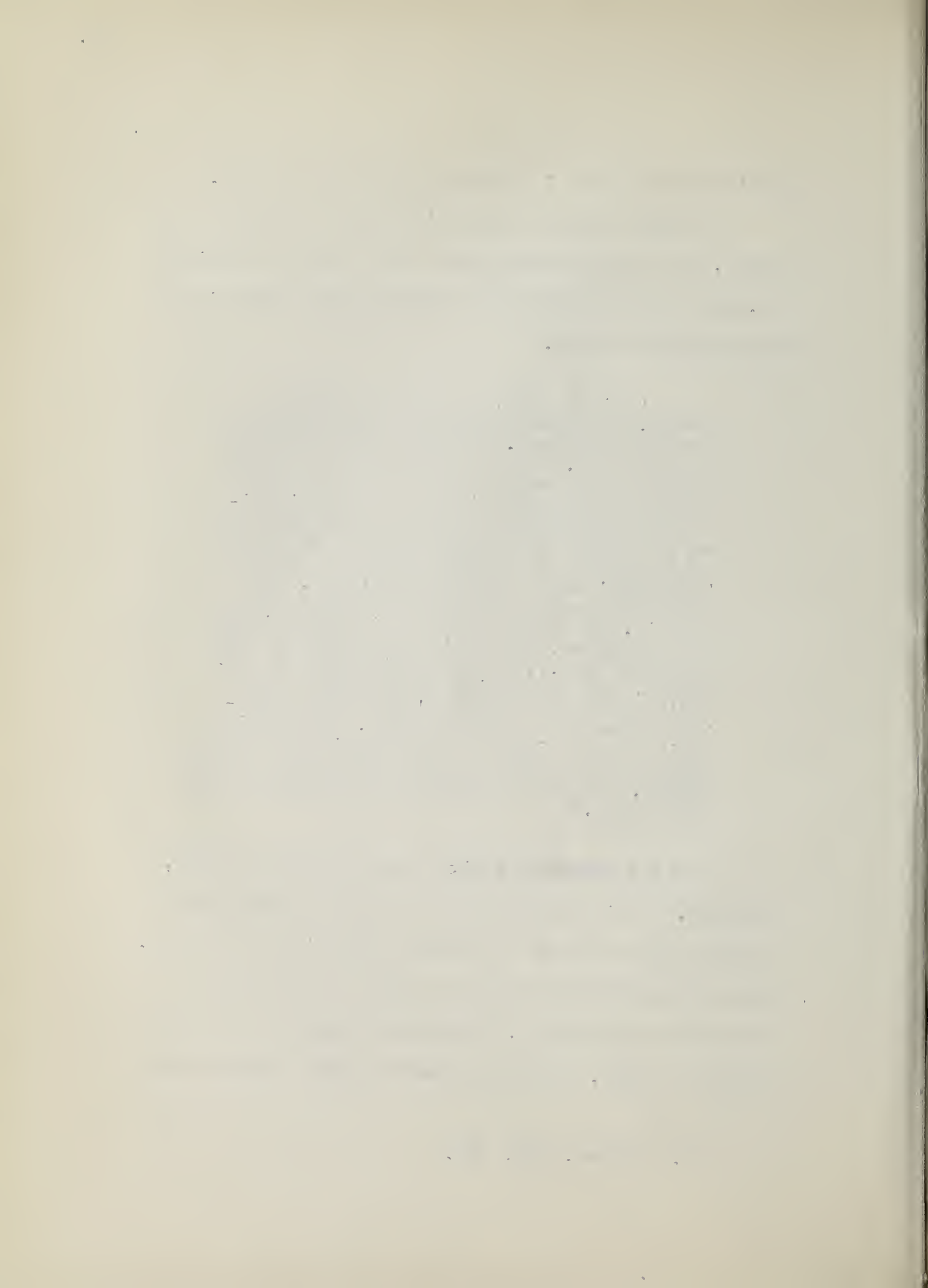
granted the churches' satisfaction in the matter.

A rather extended quotation from Professor Perry Miller, who has devoted himself to a study of Puritanism, shows the exalted place held by the sermon in the Massachusetts colony.

Puritan life, in the New England theory, was centered upon a corporate and communal ceremony, upon the oral delivery of a lecture, and the effort of the Massachusetts Bay Company to set up a due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical came ultimately to the one purpose of gathering men and women together in orderly congregations that they might sit under a 'powerful' and a literate ministry, that they might hear the Word of God as well as read it, and hear it not as it was written in revelation, but as it was expounded by that ministry...Private meditation was demanded, but meditation chiefly upon Sunday's sermon or Thursday's lecture; reading of the Bible was required, but reading of it in the light of the exposition; attendance at the sacraments was expected of the saints, but as an adjunct to attendance upon the sermon.⁵⁰

Into an atmosphere like that came John Cotton, preacher. It is apparent that in such a situation a preacher might become a powerful force if he so chose. Probably when the weather was unable to provide the theme for conversation, the latest sermon or lecture served its turn. Those who went to hear the preacher

50. Miller, NEM, 298.



not seldom took notes on his discourse in order to consult them later, and possibly use them as a basis for family devotions. In the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society is a manuscript of notes on the sermons of Cotton taken by Captain Robert Keayne, a member of the Boston congregation.

Several interesting anecdotes are told about Cotton. He seems to have been a man of strong moral character. While in England he had returned yearly to his birth-place, Derby, and he had stayed customarily at one inn there. At his coming, the innkeeper would complain and wish him gone, explaining to his patrons that "he was not able to swear while that man was under his roof."⁵¹

Once an impertinent colonial parishioner followed Cotton home from church and no doubt startled the reverend gentleman by telling him that his ministry generally had become either dark or flat. Cotton's reply might serve as a guide to other ministers who, by the very nature of their calling, are occasionally the object of kindred criticisms. He answered: "Both, brother, it may be both; let me have your prayers that it may be otherwise."⁵²

Another time a group of merry-makers coming home from

51. Mather, MCA, I, 280.

52. Mather, MCA, I, 277.

the tavern spied Cotton, and one of them, carrying more liquor than courtesy, decided to play a trick on him. He sidled up to the minister and whispered in his ear, "Cotton, thou art an old fool." To which Cotton replied, "I confess I am so: the Lord make both me and thee wiser than we are, even wise unto salvation."⁵³

Whether Cotton had a sense of humor or not is a question. Probably the foregoing answers to his critics were made with holiness in mind and not laughter. To the average Puritan life was much too serious a matter to make light of any aspect of it.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, there was at least one person in the Massachusetts Bay Colony who was not above a joke. In a conversation over God's manner of revealing himself to men, Cotton confessed his ignorance and said, "Brother, I must confess myself to want in light in those mysteries."⁵⁵ The man went home and sent Cotton

53. Mather, MCA, I, 277.

54. In his Journal Winthrop tells of a man who had to sell his oxen in order to pay his servant. He only had a few oxen left, so he told his servant that he could no longer keep him. The servant told his master that he would serve him for more of his cattle. The employer objected and asked his servant what he, the master, would do when all of his cattle were gone. The servant was quick with a reply; he said, "Then you can serve me and get your cattle back." The editor of the Journal points out that the passage comes closer to the humorous than anything else in the Journal, but Winthrop wrote in the margin opposite, "insolent". Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 228n.

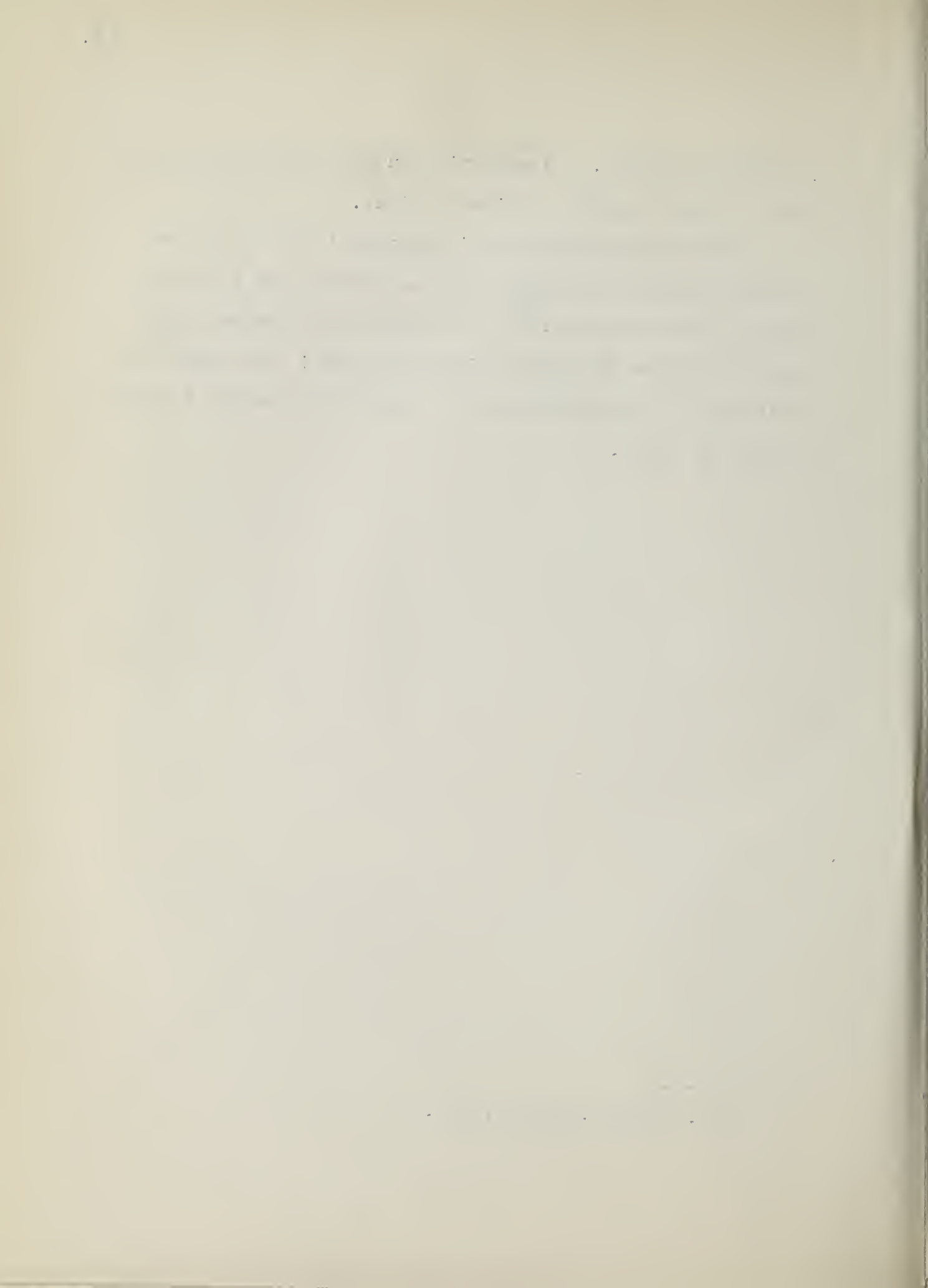
55. Mather, MCA, I, 277.

a pound of candles. In appreciation all the recipient was able to muster up was a "silent smile".

Cotton Mather comments in approval: "He would not set the beacon of his great soul on fire at the landing of such a little cockboat."⁵⁶ As though such a prank might justifiably provoke one to righteous anger! But then the influence of John Cotton was not dependent upon his having a sense of humor.

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55. Mather, MCA, I, 277.



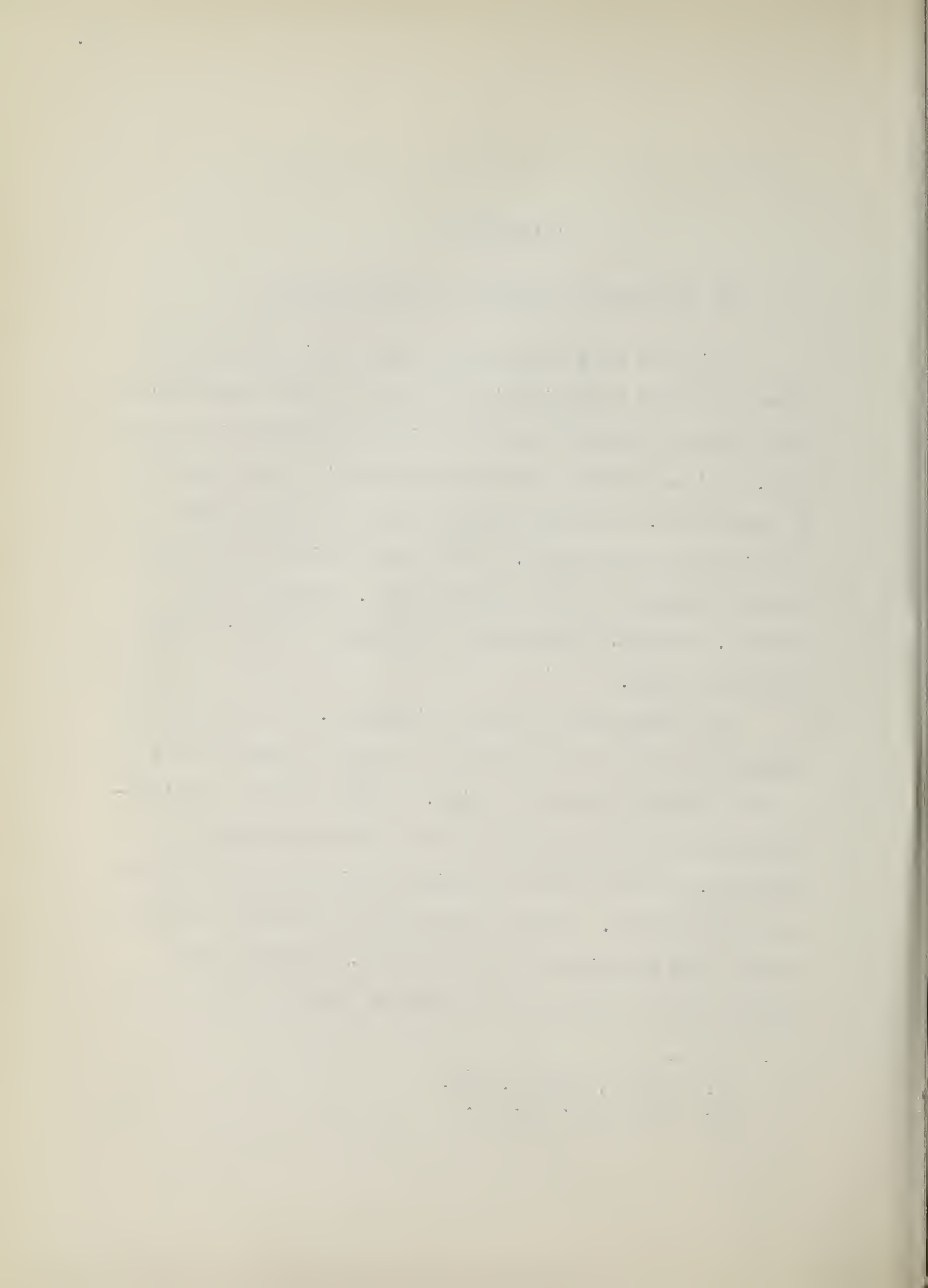
CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF COTTON IN CIVIL AFFAIRS

It is not easy to draw the line of distinction between civil and ecclesiastical affairs in the Massachusetts Bay Colony; at least from the Puritan standpoint it was not easy. Cotton Mather tells us that when it came to matters of importance, John Cotton had "a great aversion from entering into civil ones."¹ The implication is that he seldom deigned to touch the civil sea. Seen from our century, however, John Cotton was always wading in those brackish waters.

The difference is one of viewpoint. To the Puritan "Religion was not a department or phase of social life; it was the end and aim of all life."² What we see as political maneuvers on the part of our seventeenth century preacher, he regarded as religious duties quite in keeping with his calling. We draw the line of distinction between secular and religious far to the left, excluding from religion practically all of life; he drew the line far to

1. Mather, MCA, I, 277.
2. Schneider, PM, 23.



the right and included almost everything.

For the purposes of this chapter we shall investigate Cotton's influence on the actual government of the Bay Colony; the effect of his personality on the magistrates, his influence on the formulation of the laws for the colony, the power of his opinion in the interpretation of those laws, and his prestige with the governors of the colony.

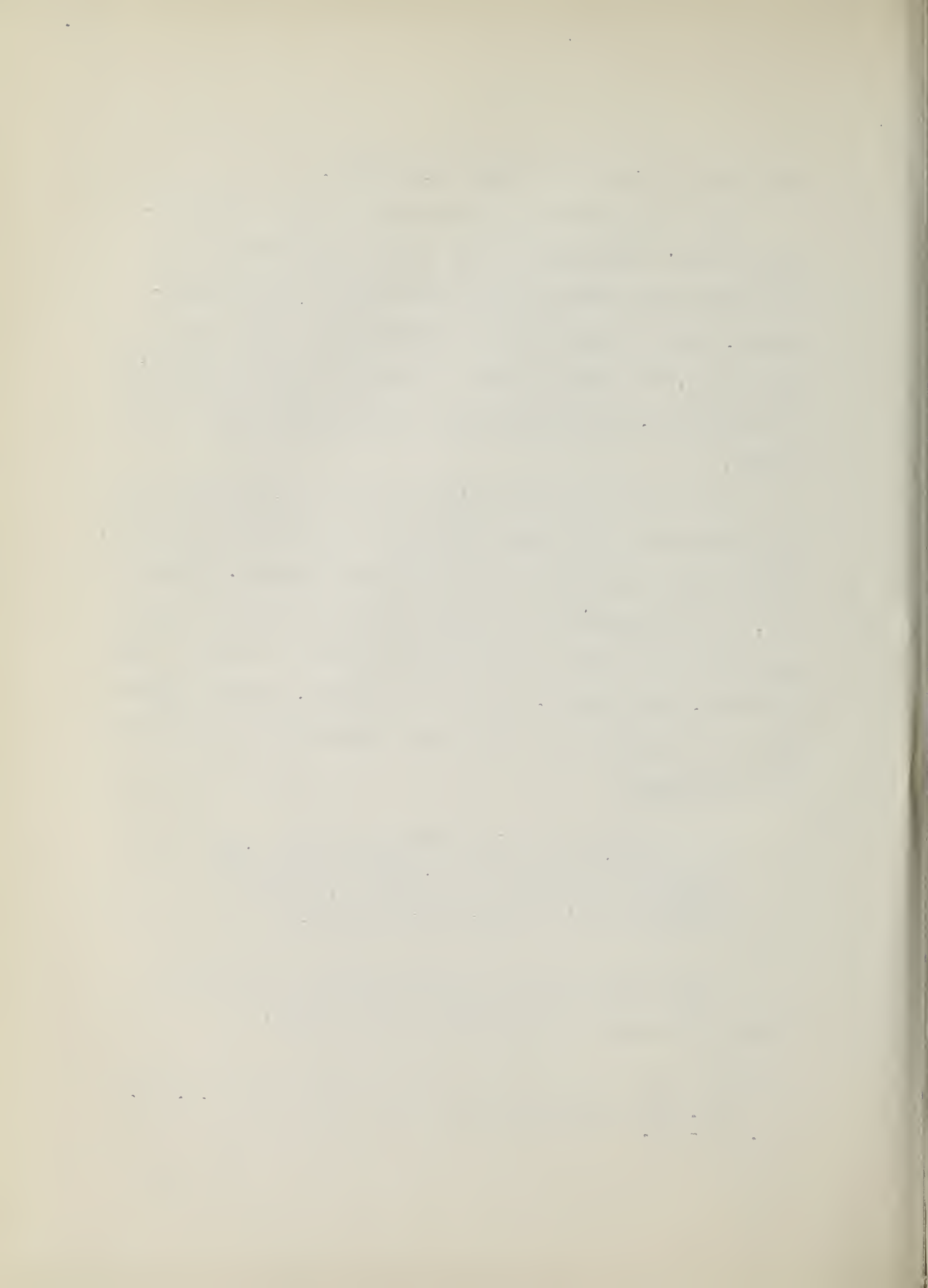
It will be necessary first of all to recall that the Massachusetts colony was established for religious reasons. In 1643 the leaders of the colonies at Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven met at Boston with the leaders of the Massachusetts colony to work out some kind of union. The colonies, as a result, joined in a league, and the "Articles of Confederation" which they subscribed to began with this sentence:

We all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim; namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity with peace.³

The General Court of Massachusetts in its first letter to Charles II some years later wrote:

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3. The Articles are printed in Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 100-105.



This vis. our liberty to walke in the faith of the gospel in all good conscience according to the order of the gospell...was the cause of our transporting ourselves, with our wives, our little ones and our substance from that pleasant land over the Atlanticke Ocean into this vast and waste wilderness, choosing rather the pure Scripture worship, with a good conscience, in a poore, remote wilderness, amongst the heathens, than the pleasure of England with submission to the imposition of the then so disposed and so far prevailing hierarchie, which we could not do without an evil conscience.⁴

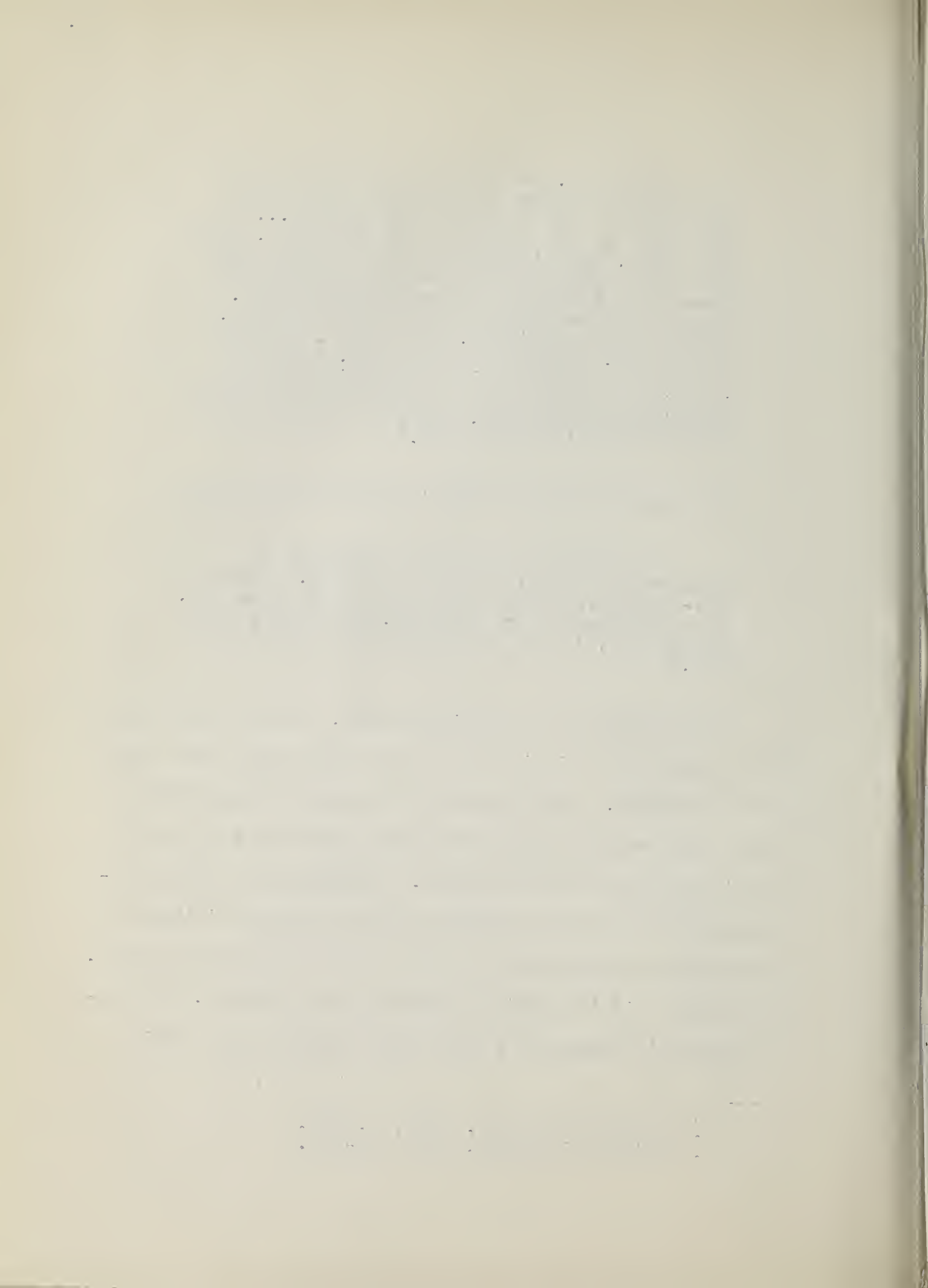
The governor was charged in his oath of office:

You shall do your best endeavor to draw on the natives of this country, called New-England, to the knowledge of the true God, and to conserve the planters, and others coming hither, in the name knowledge and fear of God.⁵

The colony had a religious basis. To say the colony had a religious basis is not to deny that there were other motives present. In the days of Elizabeth comparatively little land was available for agriculture and the lure of land in the New World was great. Propagandists like Richard Hakluyt and Walter Raleigh painted glowing pictures of the wealth and opportunity in the newly discovered country. The theater did its part to dramatize the unknown, portraying fantastic scenes of a land where diamonds and rubies

4. Quoted by Osgood, ACSC, I, 201.

5. Printed in Young, CFP, 201-202.



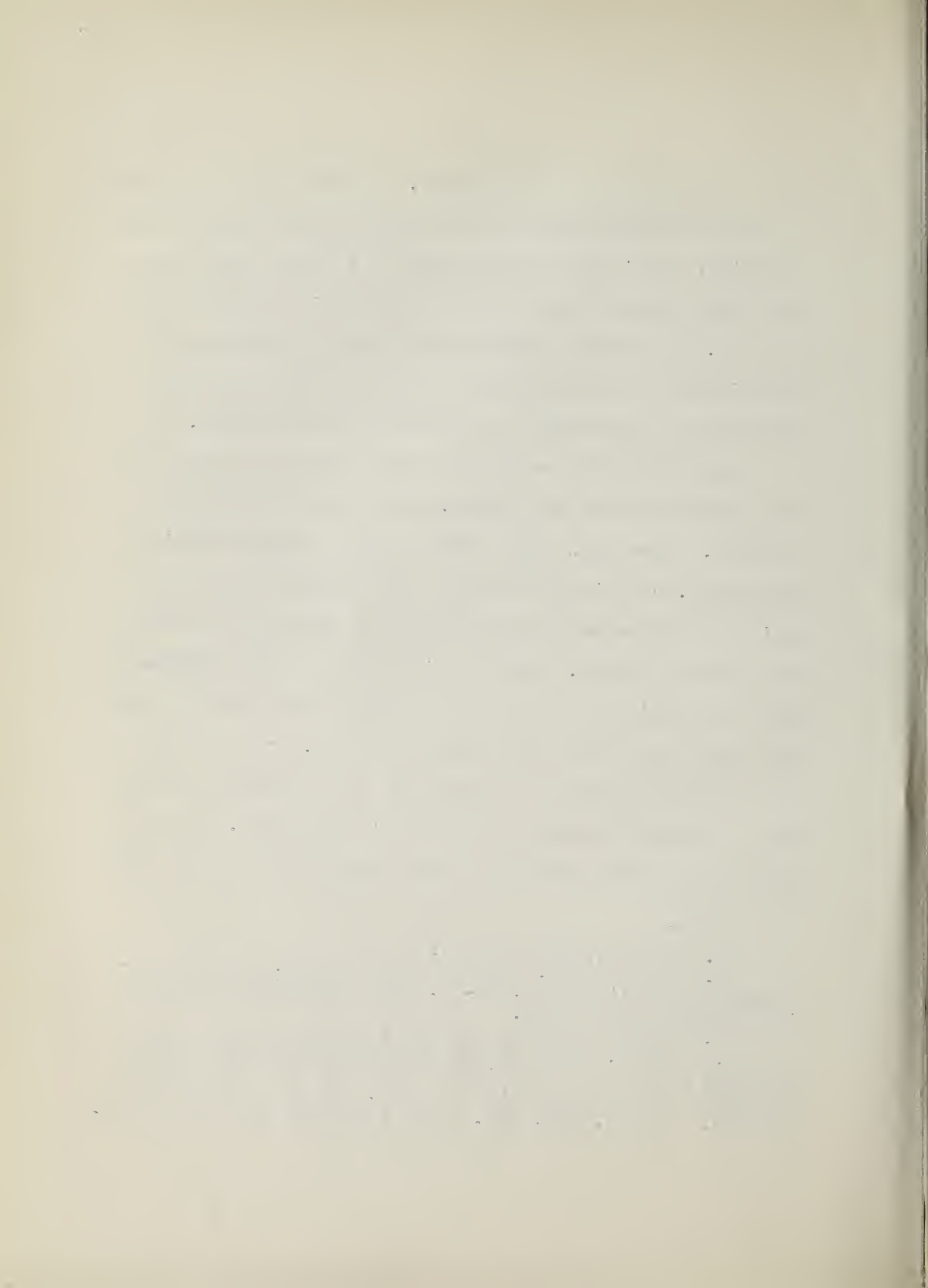
could be gathered at the seashore. The economic condition of the average Englishman of the lower classes was not encouraging; and it is probably true that if we could penetrate the minds of those who followed their leaders to the colonies, "we should doubtless find that the burdens and necessities of life determined their decisions quite as often as did high ideals on government and religion."⁶

Undoubtedly the economic motive played its share in the founding of the Bay Colony, as in the other English colonies.⁷ However, James Truslow Adams exaggerates its importance.⁸ It is instructive to be reminded that the Puritan Colonies were the only ones in which land could be owned in fee simple, without quit rent or lord; that the English counties from which the bulk of the colonists came had lower wage scales than other counties, and that the years between 1630 and 1640 were in those English colonies years of great economic readjustment and strain. But to affirm that three quarters of the population of the colony

6. Andrews, CPAH, I, 67.

7. See Andrews, CPAH, I, Chapter III, "Factors Influencing Colonization", 53-77. The foregoing paragraph is based on this source.

8. "They wanted to own land; and it was this last motive, perhaps, which mainly had attracted those twelve thousand persons out of sixteen thousand who swelled the population of Massachusetts in 1640, but were not church members." Adams, FNE, 122. This paragraph for the source.

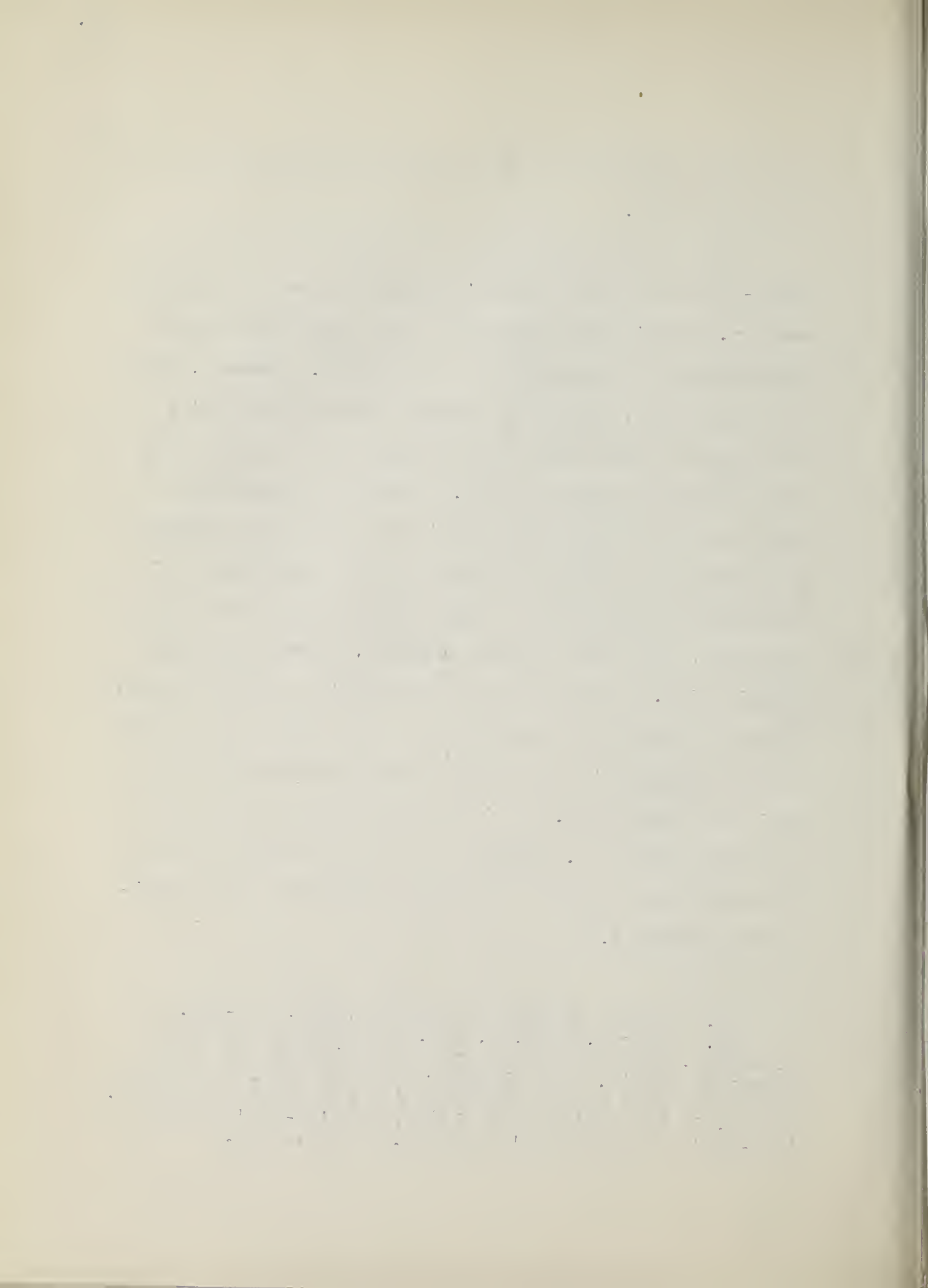


were there "undoubtedly due to economic motives" is to misread history.

Adams gives a great deal of weight to the fact that three-quarters of the colony's population were not church members, creating the impression that church membership and interest in the church are equivalent. However, that is not so today, and was certainly less so in colonial Massachusetts when such strict requirements for entrance into the church were the rule. Professor Samuel Eliot Morison gaily suggests that it is too bad no one thought of circulating a questionnaire among the inhabitants of New England asking them to check "Why did you come to New England?", "Are you a church member?", "Check preferred denomination."⁹ Although no questionnaire was circulated, enough contemporary literature has come down to us to tell us the Puritans did not sail to New England solely to be their own land lords. It is the considered opinion of Professor Charles M. Andrews that in the colony it was a minority whose loyalty to Puritan principles can be seriously questioned.¹⁰

9. See the appendix to Morison, BBC, 339-346.

10. Andrews, CPAH, I, 437. "Government was the structure, and trade the means of subsistence and the source of profit, but religion was the living, emotional force that gave to the community its reason for existence. It was, in the beginning at least, the 'be-all' and the 'end-all' of the colony's destiny." Ibid., 462.



The fact of the colony's religious basis is important in that it gave clergymen great prestige in the affairs of the colony. Just as in a colony founded for culinary purposes, a cook would be important, so in a colony whose avowed raison d'etre was the proper worship of God, a man of God, a minister, was of prime importance.

He was important, for one reason, because "the basis of the Puritan Commonwealth, as of the Church, was the Bible."¹¹ Numerous commentators have spoken of the Bible as "the statute-book" of the colony, and with justice. The first codification of laws for the colony, which was accomplished mainly by Nathaniel Ward and accepted in 1641, read that a verdict should be reached "in the case of the defect of a law in any particuler case by the word of God."¹² The laws further provided that no custom should prevail in any moral cause which could be proved "morrallie sinfull by the word of God."¹³

John Cotton himself said: "The magistrate being in Gods stead and judging for God; cannot judge as god will have them but according to his own Lawes."¹⁴ He goes on

11. Ellis, Art.(1880), 384. Ellis, PAM, 174.

12. Ward, BL.

13. Quoted by Hilkey, LDM, 69.

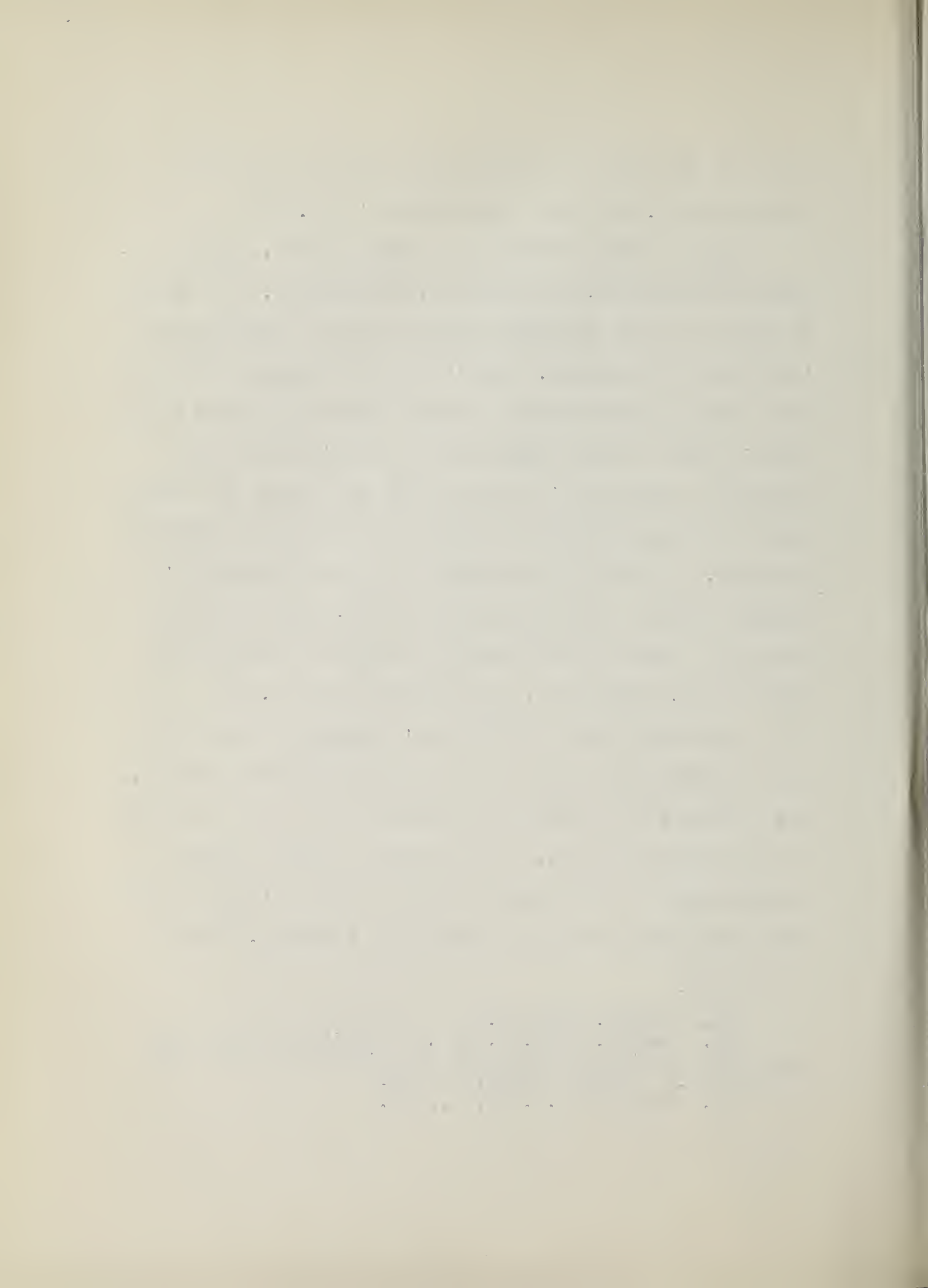
14. Cotton, MJB, 13.

to say in the same discussion that "The more any law smells of man, the more unprofitable it is."¹⁵

Now the Word of God is no simple matter, for it consists of hyperbole, and metaphor, and parable. The layman is sure to become perplexed when he tries to grapple with its store of knowledge. And it is to be expected that he will turn to those who have devoted years of study to the Book in order to have light shed on particularly dark passages; especially is this so when the volume is looked upon as having immediate bearing on contemporary problems of state. So it is no surprise to read one historian's judgment that: "The clergy in an extra-legal capacity acted as a board of referees on important questions of legislation, judicature, and practical policy."¹⁶

Again and again in Winthrop's Journal we read how the ministers are asked in by the magistrates for advice. And sometimes the ministers volunteer their advice when it has not been solicited. The Governor and his council confide with the ministers on what is the just thing to do with some Indians who have murdered a colonist.¹⁷ The

- . 15. Cotton, MJB, 13.
- 16. Osgood, ACSC, I, 217. "The influence of the clergy was entirely unofficial and without the sanction of the law." Andrews, CPAH, I, 448.
- 17. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 186.



General Court ask the ministers to advise them on relationships of the clergy with members of the court.¹⁸ The ministers are requested to give their idea on the correct punishment for adultery.¹⁹ The ministers are sent for by the Court to take into consideration "the great disorder general through the country in costliness of apparel, and following new fashions."²⁰ Although the ministers promised to do something about this matter of fashionable dress "little was done about it; for divers of the elders' wives, etc., were in some measure partners in this general disorder."²¹

It seems there is hardly a meeting of the General Court at which ministers are not also present in a body, being requested and offering freely their advice. They advise the Court to order fasts.²² Governor Winthrop acknowledges his own error in not personally consulting with the elders on one occasion "as their manner was in matters of less consequence."²³ The ministers were, of course, consulted in questions of banishment for heresy.²⁴

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- 18. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 210.
- 19. Ibid., 262.
- 20. Ibid., 279.
- 21. Loc. cit.
- 22. Ibid., II, 81.
- 23. Ibid., 130.
- 24. Ibid., 177.

They are consulted as to whether the seizure of a ship by the colony is justified.²⁵ Whether it did or not, such moral advice always on tap should have saved the wear and tear on the individual consciences of the legislators.

Two incidents are of particular significance in showing the status of the clergy in the colony. First, after the "Body of Lawes" had been drawn up for the colony by Nathaniel Ward, it was given to the General Court which in time passed it on to the ministers for their approval.

All the elders met at Ipswich; they took into consideration the book which was committed to them by the general court, and were much different in their judgments about it, but at length they agreed.²⁶

The elders probably met at Ipswich rather than at Boston, their usual meeting place, out of deference to Ward, who was pastor of the church at Ipswich. That the laws of the colony should be drafted by a minister and then given to the clergy to sanction or suggest possible amendments is indicative of the high place the clergy held in the colony.

The second instance of ministerial prestige came with the close of the Civil War in England in 1646. The authorities in England at this time again turned their attention to America. News of persecution in New England

25. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 201.

26. Ibid., 86.

had reached the Old World, and the leaders in Massachusetts began to fear for their liberty. So they held a meeting to consider their relationship to England. The elders were respectively invited to give of their advice in the matter. They did and, as might be expected, their advice concluded with a call to prayer: "This weighty case of our liberties do call the churches to a solemn seeking of the Lord for the upholding of our state and disappointment of our adversaries."²⁷

There is evidence that the elders not only offered their counsel but that they had the power to initiate legislation. In October, 1640 the elders proposed that the General Court clearly distinguish between the powers of the church and the powers of the magistrate.²⁸ In June, 1646 some of the elders presented a bill to the General Court requesting that a Synod of the churches be held in the end of the summer. This bill was passed, though not without some dissent.²⁹

The magistrates and the ministers worked together hand in glove. As Winthrop put it, "The Ministers have great power with the people, whereby throughe the great correspondency between the Magistrates & them, they are

27. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 295.

28. Ibid., 15.

29. Ibid., 274.

the more easily governed."³⁰ What could a mere citizen do when the actions of the rulers could be shown to have the support of Scripture, a Book which Calvin had said, "obtains the same complete credit and authority with believer...as if they had heard the very words pronounced by God himself."³¹

That Cotton would be a leader among the clergy is not hard to believe. His remarkable knowledge of the Bible would serve a utilitarian purpose; he would be able to give scriptural justification and warrant for governmental action. There was probably not an occurrence in the colony during his lifetime for which he was not able to discover a Biblical parallel.

On occasion Cotton served as spokesman for the elders. When the elders were asked to opine whether the magistrates constituted the standing council for the Commonwealth in the absence of the General Court, their affirmative decision "was delivered in writing by Mr. Cotton in the name of them all, they all being present, and not one dissent."³² It was Cotton who, for the elders, reproved

30. Winthrop (ed.), LLJW, II, 460; cited by Miller, OM, 249.

31. Quoted by Miller, OM, 15.

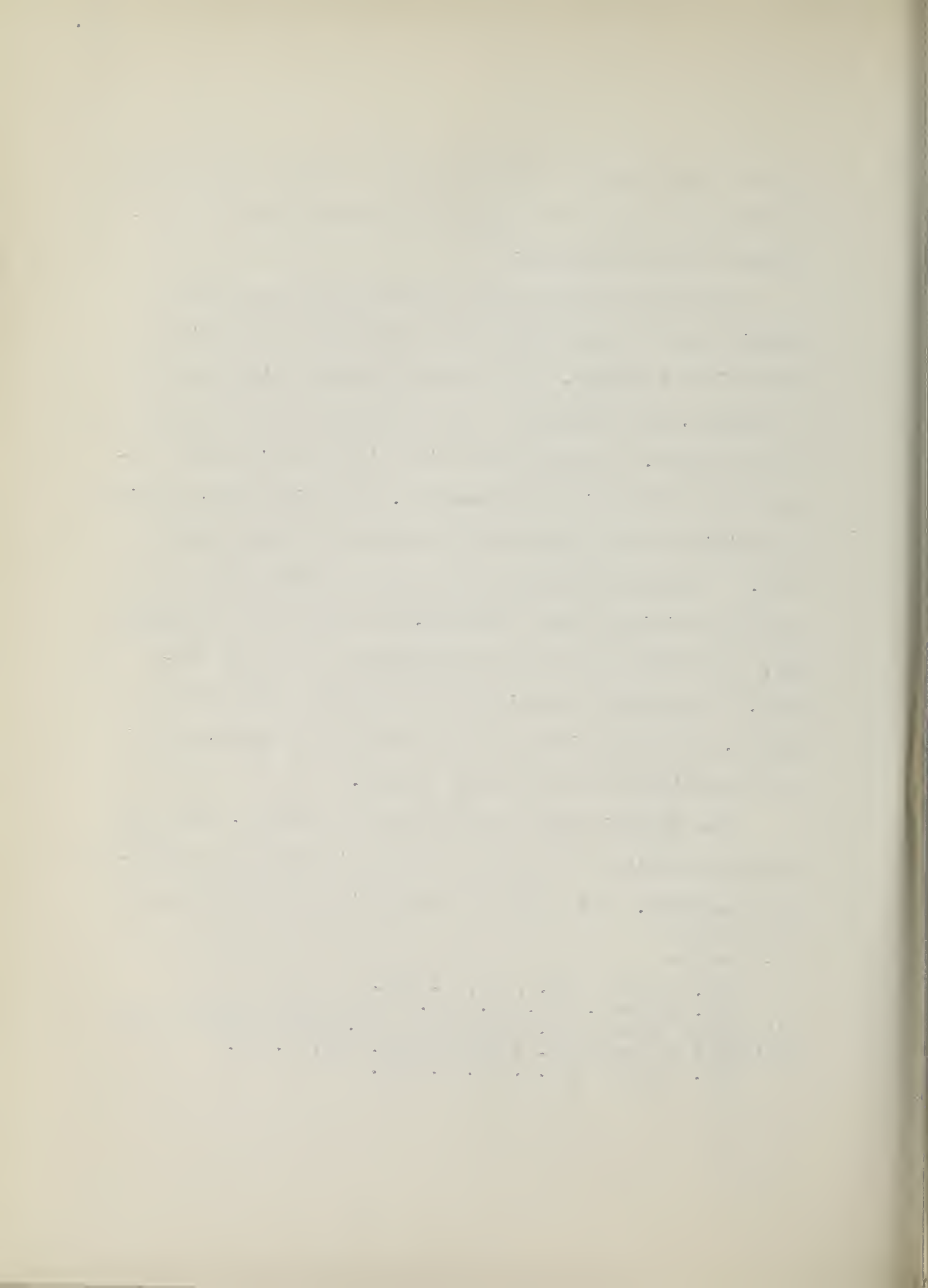
32. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 211.

Captain John Underhill because he had asserted among other heresies that he had had a spiritual experience while enjoying a pipe of tobacco!³³

As teacher of the Boston church Cotton acquired a certain amount of prestige; his church was the leading church in the colony. For nine of Cotton's nineteen years as teacher, the Governor of the Commonwealth was a member of his church. Governor Vane lived in Cotton's house during his residence in Massachusetts, and while here he built an addition to the house which he gave to Cotton when he left.³⁴ Governor Winthrop was a great admirer of Cotton; he seldom visited other churches, he tells us in his Journal, preferring no doubt the preaching of his own teacher.³⁵ Although John Wilson was pastor of the Boston church, Winthrop seldom if ever mentions his preaching; it is always Cotton about whom he writes.

The General Court regularly met at Boston, therefore Cotton was close at hand to exert his influence on important measures. Not only did the Court meet in Boston, but

 33. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 276.
 34. Hosmer, LHV, 47, 169. "There was a great friendship between Mr. Cotton and him, which seems to have continued to the last." Hutchinson, HMB, I, 48.
 35. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 306.



sometimes, and probably often, it met in the meeting house of the Boston church. Winthrop records three such instances, and they read as though it were the usual procedure.³⁶ It is likely that the meeting house was the only building commodious enough to house a large gathering in colonial Boston. Surely a government based ostensibly on the Bible could not meet in any more appropriate place.

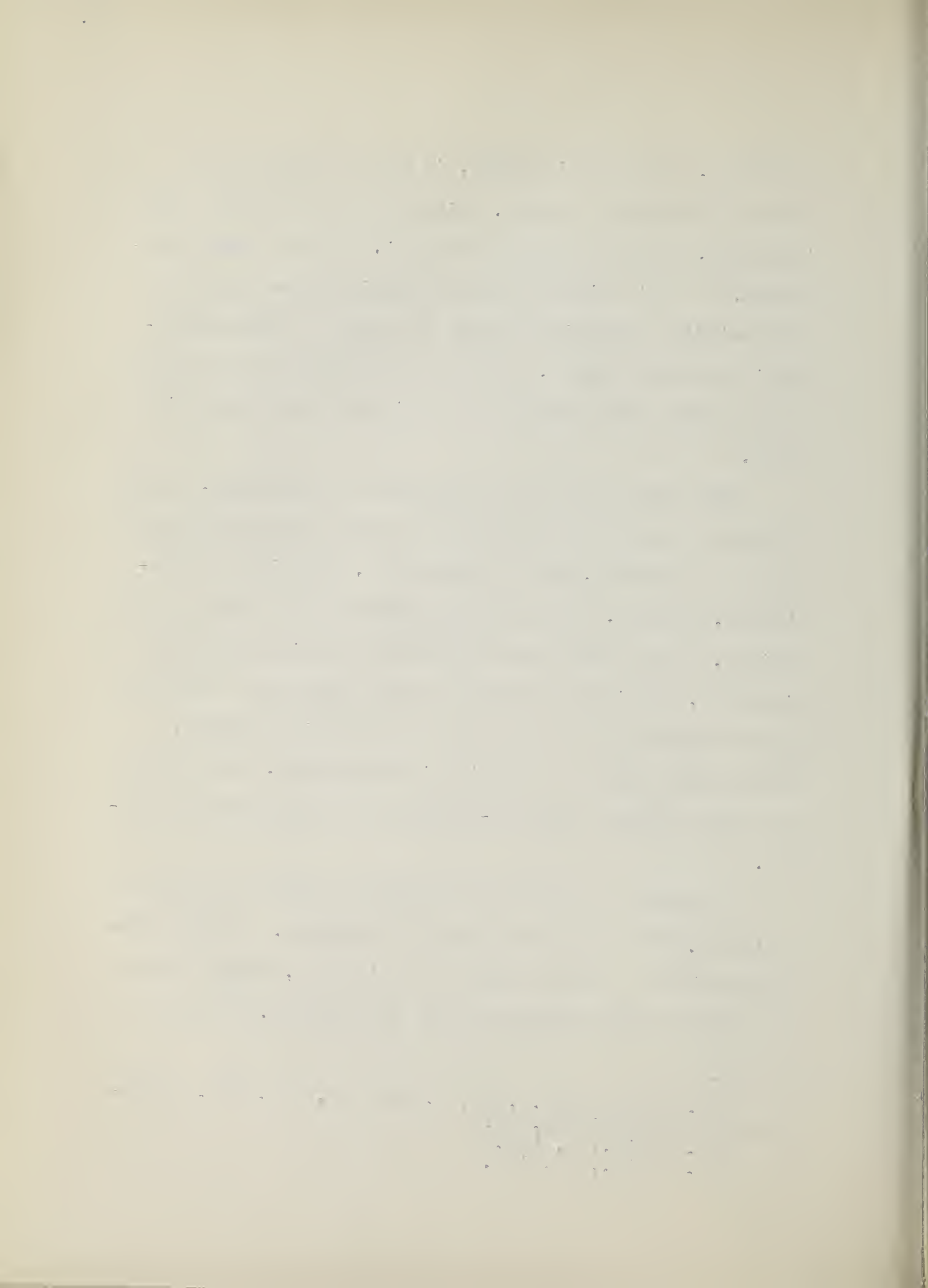
Once when the General Court met in Cambridge, Thomas Hooker was supposed to preach the sermon before the Court opened its session, but he begged off, pleading his "unfitness," and Mr. Cotton "being desired by all the court" obliged.³⁷ Not only does this show Cotton's popularity (in 1634), but it also indicates that Hooker was asked to preach because he was pastor of the Cambridge church; probably the Court was meeting in his church, and it was customary to have the host-pastor do the necessary preaching.

It seems to have been customary to have a sermon or lecture before the Court began its business. In 1644 Winthrop writes: "At the court of assistants, Thomas Morton was called forth presently after the lecture."³⁸ The

 36. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 125; II, 233, 237. Lechford confirms this PD, 60.

37. Ibid., I, 133.

38. Ibid., II, 194.



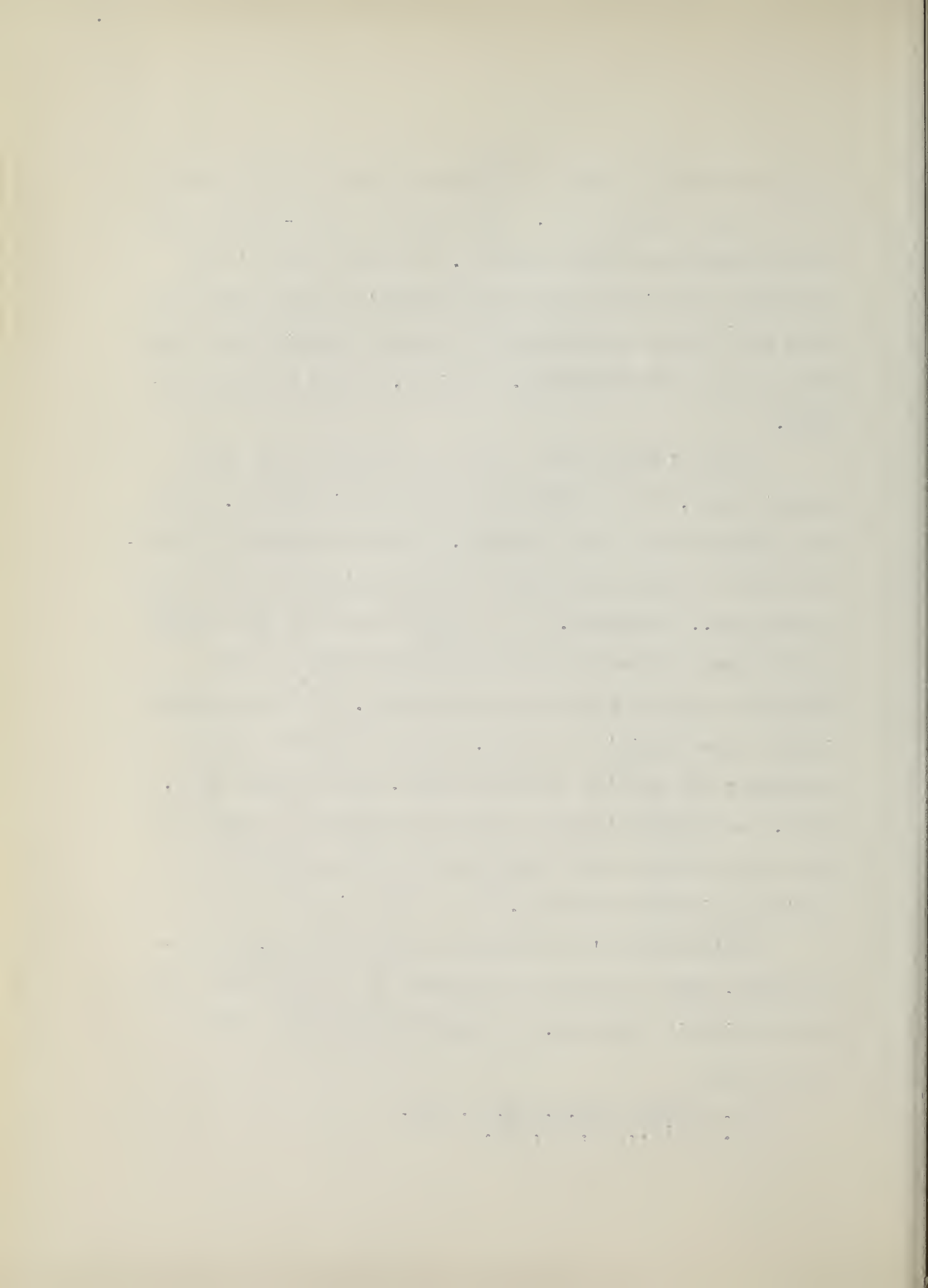
passage reads as though a lecture was the regular prelude to the Court proceedings. Probably the court-preacher was John Cotton more often than not. Not only would it be courteous but wise to ask the Governor's teacher (who was also the teacher of the church in whose building the court met) to lead the devotions. Besides, he was a good preacher.

Cotton lectured not only to the Court which met occasionally, but he lectured every week in Boston. And his lectures were well attended. Winthrop speaks of a lecture day at Boston when "most of the magistrates and elders in the bay...assembled."³⁹ In fact so many of the clergy came to hear Cotton that business concerning all the churches could be conducted on that day. At one lecture a letter from Virginia was read, requesting ministers to volunteer for service in that colony, and the next year, 1643, one of the ministers who had responded to the call presented letters from Virginian Christians to fellow believers in Massachusetts.⁴⁰

Cotton Mather's assertion to the contrary, notwithstanding, John Cotton was not averse to dealing with civil matters in his lectures. At one time there was talk of

39. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 328.

40. Ibid., II, 73, 94.



dismissing some of the oldest magistrates because of their age.

This coming to Mr. Cotton...he took occasion from his text, the next lecture day, to confute, and sharply (in his mild manner) to reprove such miscarriage, which he termed a slighting or dishonoring of parents, and told the country, that such as were decayed in their estates by attending the service of the country ought to be maintained by the country, and not set aside for their poverty ...This public reproof gave such a check to the former motion as it was never revived after.⁴¹

Up to that point it sounds like a complete triumph for Cotton. However, Winthrop continues: "Yet by what followed it appeared, that the fire, from which it brake out, was only raked up, not quenched."⁴²

When Robert Keayne, a Boston merchant and member of Cotton's congregation, was fined by the court for exorbitant prices on imported goods, Cotton devoted his lecture to a clarification of the principles of buying and selling. Two of the principles he exposed as false are noteworthy.

1. That a man might sell as dear as he can, and buy as cheap as he can.
2. That, as a man may take the advan-

41. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 49.

42. Loc. cit.

tage of his own skill or ability, so he may
of another's ignorance or necessity.⁴³

We are not told whether Keayne gave up extortion or not.
He probably did. Later he is accused of stealing a sow,
of which charge he was exonerated.⁴⁴

One reason Cotton had ample opportunity to exert his
influence was that he was available. We read that a day,
which was set aside to consider a letter from the Dutch,
was so wet only a handful of magistrates were present.
They conferred "with some of the elders who were at hand."⁴⁵
There can be little doubt that Cotton was there. Nor can
there be any more doubt that New England's famous weather
often prevented a full representation of advising elders.
Earlier a matter of urgent business arose which brooked no
delay. The Governor of Connecticut was having Indian
trouble and wanted advice post haste. "Such of the magis-
trates and elders as could meet on the sudden" did so and
sent the Governor their answer.⁴⁶ Living in Boston, Cot-
ton could and no doubt did "meet on the sudden."

The Massachusetts Bay Colony was very touchy about
its relationship with England.⁴⁷ And so when they were

43. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 317, 318.

44. Ibid., II, 64, 65.

45. Ibid., 133.

46. Ibid., I, 266.

47. See Miller, OM, 215-220.

accused of being rebels and traitors by a visiting sailor, the leaders of the colony were horrified. The sailor made the charge because the colony did not fly the King's colors over the fort of Boston.

That night Governor Winthrop and Thomas Dudley had a quick conference with Mr. Cotton, and the three agreed it would be all right to hoist the colors over the fort.⁴⁸ There were unquestionably other matters which Winthrop fails to record that prompted the Governor to seek the easily accessible advice of his teacher-pastor.

And Cotton would be only too willing to help. It was quite in line with his political philosophy. At a lecture in Boston in 1637 he

proved from that in Numbers 27:21, that the rulers of the people should consult with the ministers of the churches upon occasion of any war to be undertaken, and any other weighty business.⁴⁹

Winthrop heard that sermon and copied the foregoing paraphrase of it into his Journal. Heaven only knows how many times as a ruler of the people he consulted Cotton about

48. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 182.

49. Ibid., 231. "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord..." Nm. 27:21

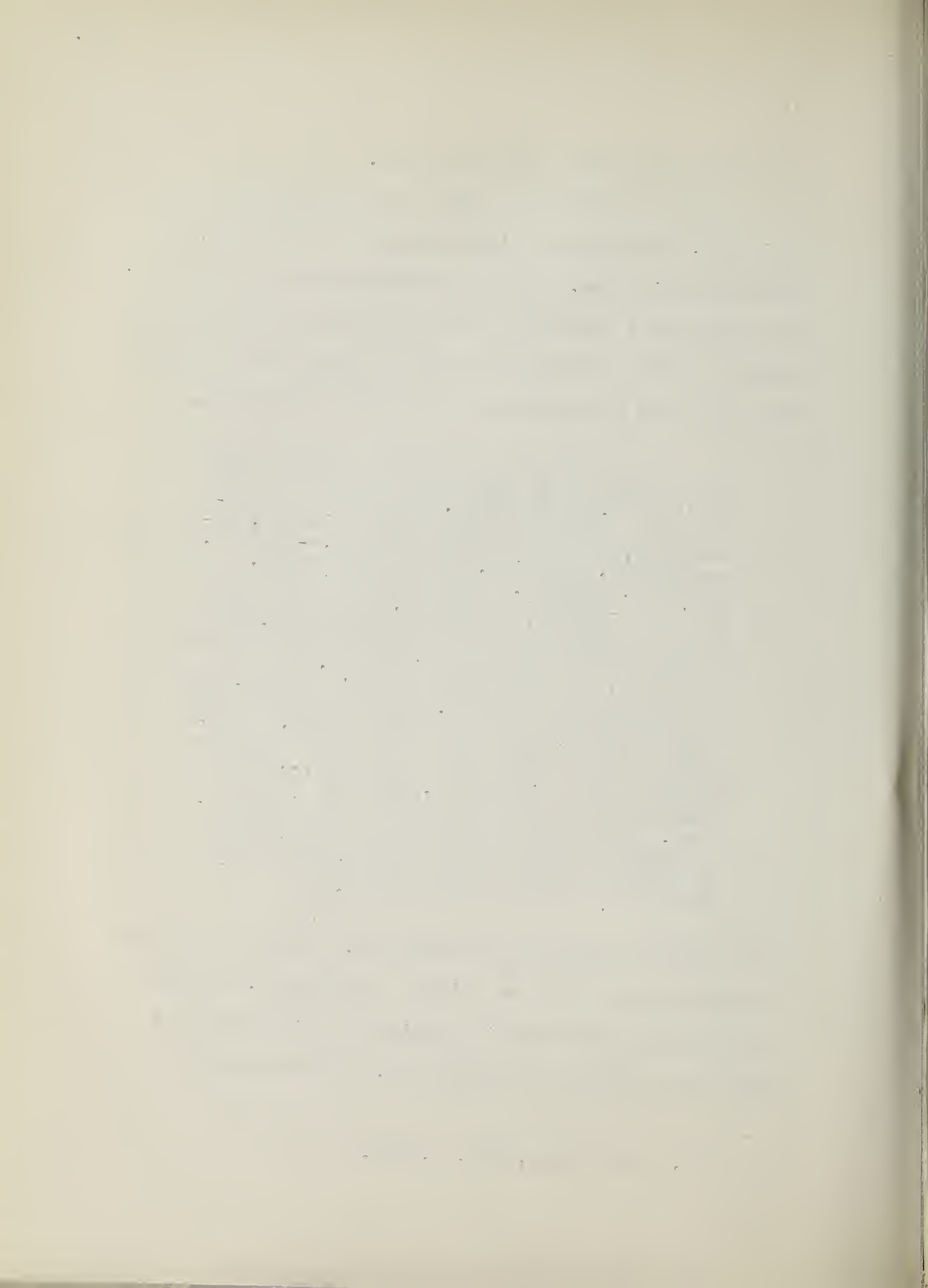
the "weighty business" of the colony.

Cotton believed the rulers should consult with the ministers, for he was a firm believer in theocracy, rule based on God's laws. And who should know more about God's laws than God's ministers? A letter to Lord Saye and Seal written in 1636 reveals not only his high regard for the Bible but also his theocratic political principles.

I am very apt to believe that the word and Scriptures of God does conteyne a short upoluposis, or platform, not onely of theology, but also of other sacred sciences, attendants, and handmaids thereunto,--ethicks, oeconomics, polities, church government, prophecy, academy. It is very suitable to God's all-sufficient wisdom, and to the fullness and perfection of Holy Scriptures, not only to prescribe perfect rules for the right ordering of a private man's soule, but also for the right ordering of a man's family, yea of the commonwealth too. When a commonwealth hath liberty to moulde his own frame, I conceive the Scripture hath given full direction for the right ordering of the same...As for monarchy and aristocracy, they are both of them clearly approved and directed in Scripture, yet so as referreth the soveraigntie to himself and setteth up Theocracy in both as the best form of government in the commonwealth as well as the church.⁵⁰

Cotton had no sympathy for democracy. In the same letter to Lord Saye and Seal he writes: "Democracy, I do not conceive that ever God did ordain as a fit government either for church or commonwealth. If the people be

50. Hutchinson, HMB, I, 497.



governor who shall be governed?"⁵¹

Politically John Winthrop and John Cotton were at one. Winthrop held, "The best part of community is always the least, and of that best part the wiser is always the lesser."⁵² When it appeared that a unicameral legislature would be demanded by the inhabitants of the commonwealth, Winthrop prevented it on the grounds that it would be democratic.

If we should change from a mixt aristocracie to a mere Democratie, first we should have no warrant in scripture for it, there was no such government in Israel...A Democratie is amongst most civil nations, accounted the meanest and worst of all forms of government.⁵³

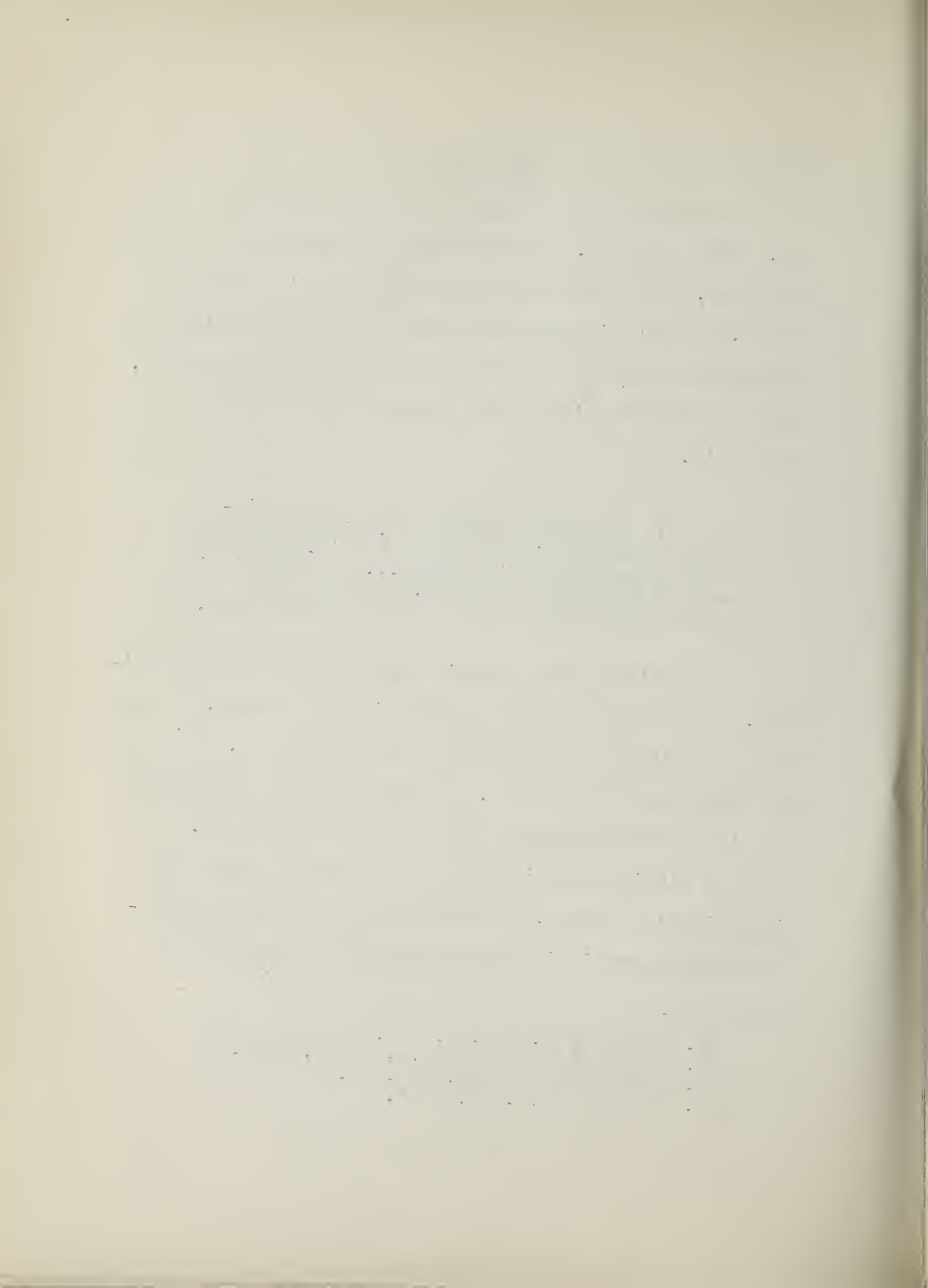
That Cotton had a hand in civil affairs is very evident, but that he was all powerful in that sphere, or anywhere near it (as has sometimes been suggested), is simply not borne out by the facts. In May 1634 Cotton preached the first Election Sermon before the General Court.⁵⁴ There is significance in the fact that he preached the first Election Sermon, but in view of his supposed popularity and power it is odd that he never preached any

51. Hutchinson, HMB, I, 497.

52. Quoted by Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 125n.

53. Quoted by Morison, BBC, 92.

54. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, 124f.



except the first. There is no record that he ever preached another such sermon during his entire remaining
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 eighteen years of life.

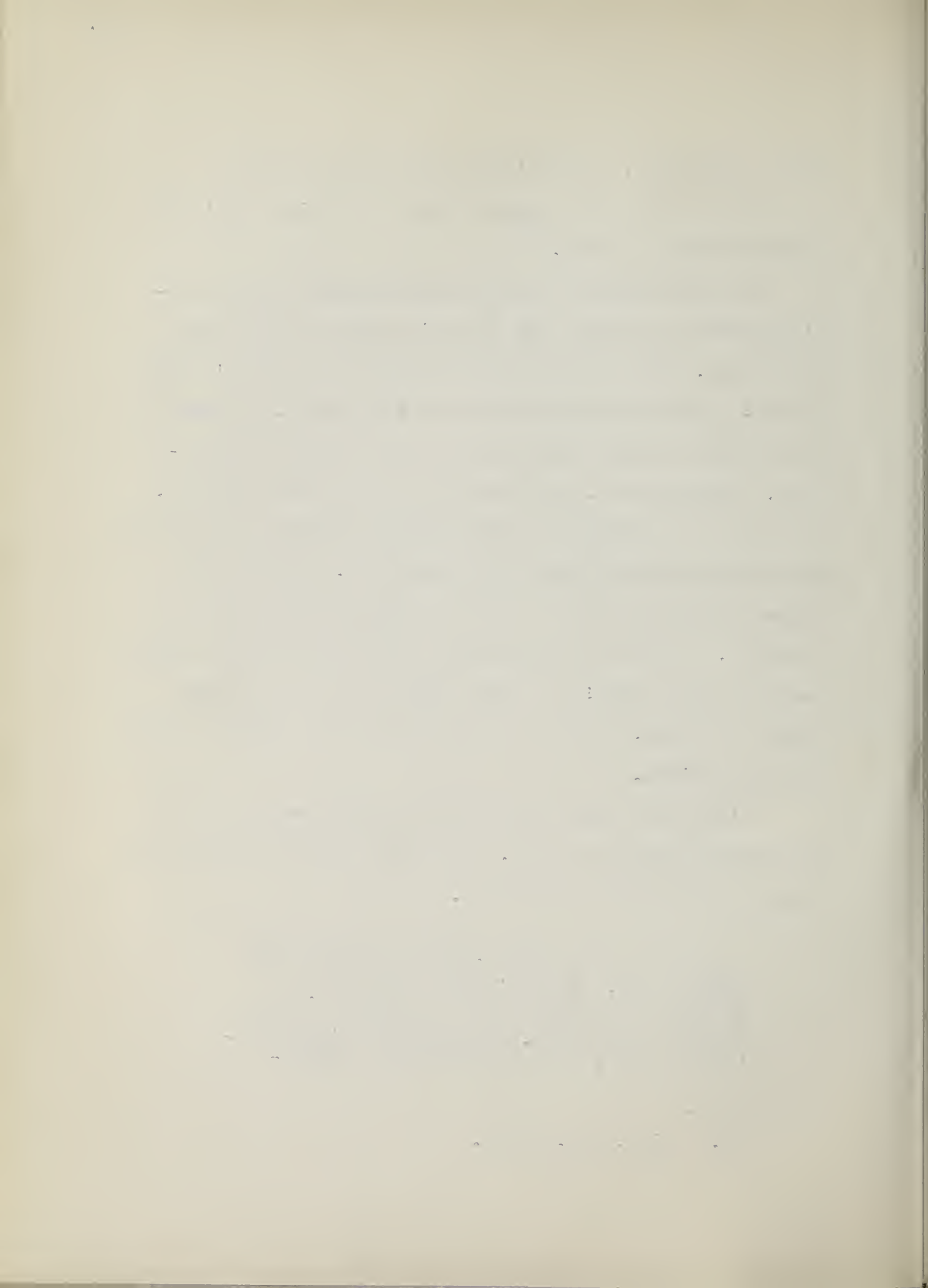
In this sermon of 1634 Cotton proposed that no officer should be turned out of office unless there was a just cause, unless the man had betrayed the public's trust in him. Had he been questioned on the matter, no doubt he would have affirmed that elections were really unnecessary. Nevertheless, his hearers did not agree with him. Though it was manifestly a discourteous thing to do to the pastor whose church they were meeting in, the electors turned Winthrop out of office and elected Dudley the new Governor. In fact they elected a different Governor every year for four years! Not that they did it in flagrant scorn of Cotton, but he was obviously out of sympathy with the proceedings.

Five years later when Winthrop was re-elected for the third consecutive year, a familiar voice was raised in favor of life tenure of office.

One of the elders, being present with those of his church, when they were to prepare their votes for the election, declared his judgment that a governor ought to be for his life, alleging for his authority the practise of all the best common-

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55. Swift, Art.(1895).



wealths in Europe, and especially that of Israel by God's own ordinance.⁵⁶

The chances are that was Cotton again, harping on one of his pet political theories. But the next year Dudley was returned to office and Winthrop turned out. Cotton could not even convince the rest of the ministers that his idea was best. Many of them worked for the election of Dudley, "fearing lest the long continuance of one man in the place should bring it to be for life, and, in time, hereditary."⁵⁷

The people seemed to delight in doing the opposite from what the preacher told them to do. At the election of 1643 Ezekiel Rogers, pastor at Rowley, preached the election sermon in Boston before the magistrates and deputies, instructed them in what he thought the qualifications for a Governor should be, and added that no man should be re-elected. His listeners re-elected Winthrop.⁵⁸

During nine of the nineteen years that Winthrop lived in the colony, he was Governor; the other ten years he was either Deputy-Governor or an Assistant to the Governor.⁵⁹ How instrumental Cotton was in those elections

56. Hosmer (ed.), *WJ*, I, 303.

57. *Ibid.*, II, 3.

58. *Ibid.*, 98.

59. Morison, *BBC*, 79.

we cannot say. If he had had his way there would have been no elections. But he did not have his way; there were elections, and two of the three times he was most active, his candidate was defeated.

In 1636 Lord Saye and Seal in collaboration with some other noblemen wrote to the leaders of the colony inquiring whether there was an aristocratic class in the commonwealth; the Lords desiring, of course, if they came to America to be of that class.⁶⁰ In his considered reply Cotton points out that while the aristocratic class had not so strong a hand on the government of the colony as the Lords desired, steps were being taken in that direction. A Standing Council had been created and the councillors were members of the Council for life. Only two, Cotton points out, had been chosen, the colony "not willing to choose more, till they see what further better choyce the Lord will send over to them."⁶¹ (Perhaps the Lord in his inscrutable wisdom would send Lord Saye and Seal.) The second step toward aristocratic rule was the investment of the Governor and his Assistants with a negative voice by which they could defeat any legislation proposed by the elected representatives of the people.

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60. Printed in Hutchinson, HMB, I, 410-413.

61. Cotton's letter follows the proposals; *ibid.*, 414-417.



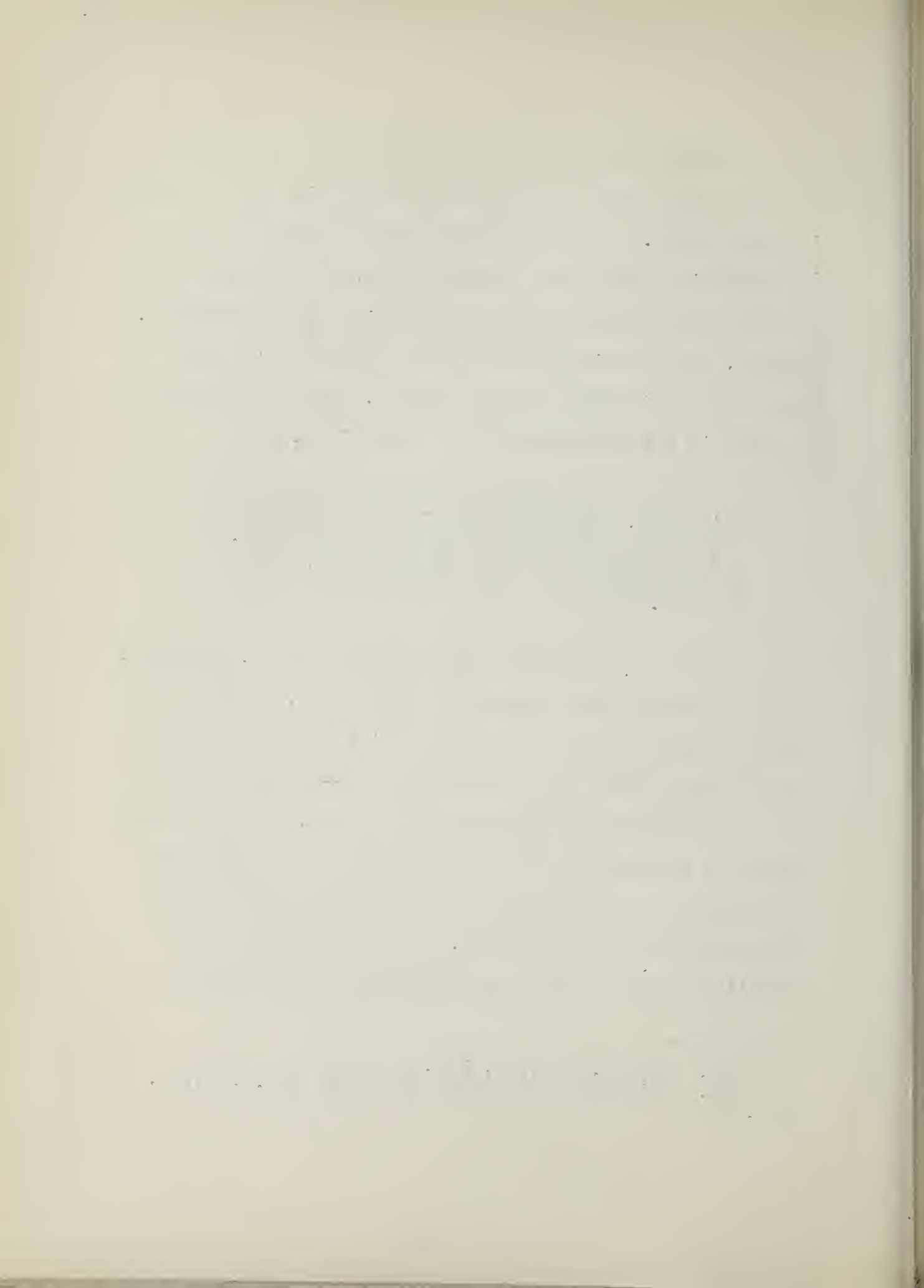
Undoubtedly Cotton was an enthusiastic supporter of the Standing Council; it was the old question of life tenure in a new guise. If the freemen wanted to turn a governor out of office every year well and good, but here was to be a body of men beyond the reach of their capricious hands. However, the Council did not live up to Cotton's fond hopes for it; it fell on stony ground. The record of its dealings in the commonwealth are negligible.

No duties seem to have been imposed on this body, except that of issuing commissions to military officers during the Pequot War, and of preparing for defence against a possible interference from the home government in 1636.⁶²

Three years after the Council was created, an elder, whom we have earlier conjectured was Cotton, began at the time of elections vociferously to voice his theory that the governor should be elected for life--perhaps because he saw the failure of the Standing Council.⁶³ His remarks caused so much unfavorable comment among the people that the deputies in reaction against the idea of life tenure attacked the Standing Council. They interpreted the Council to be not a new governing order; they decided its

62. Osgood, ACSC, I, 179.

63. This paragraph based on Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 303f.



members should be drawn from those who had been magistrates and no councillor could perform any act of magistracy unless he were annually chosen to that office.

"The order was an acknowledgment of the utter uselessness of the Council, and with the death of Winthrop it vanishes from sight."⁶⁴ Another defeat for Cotton.

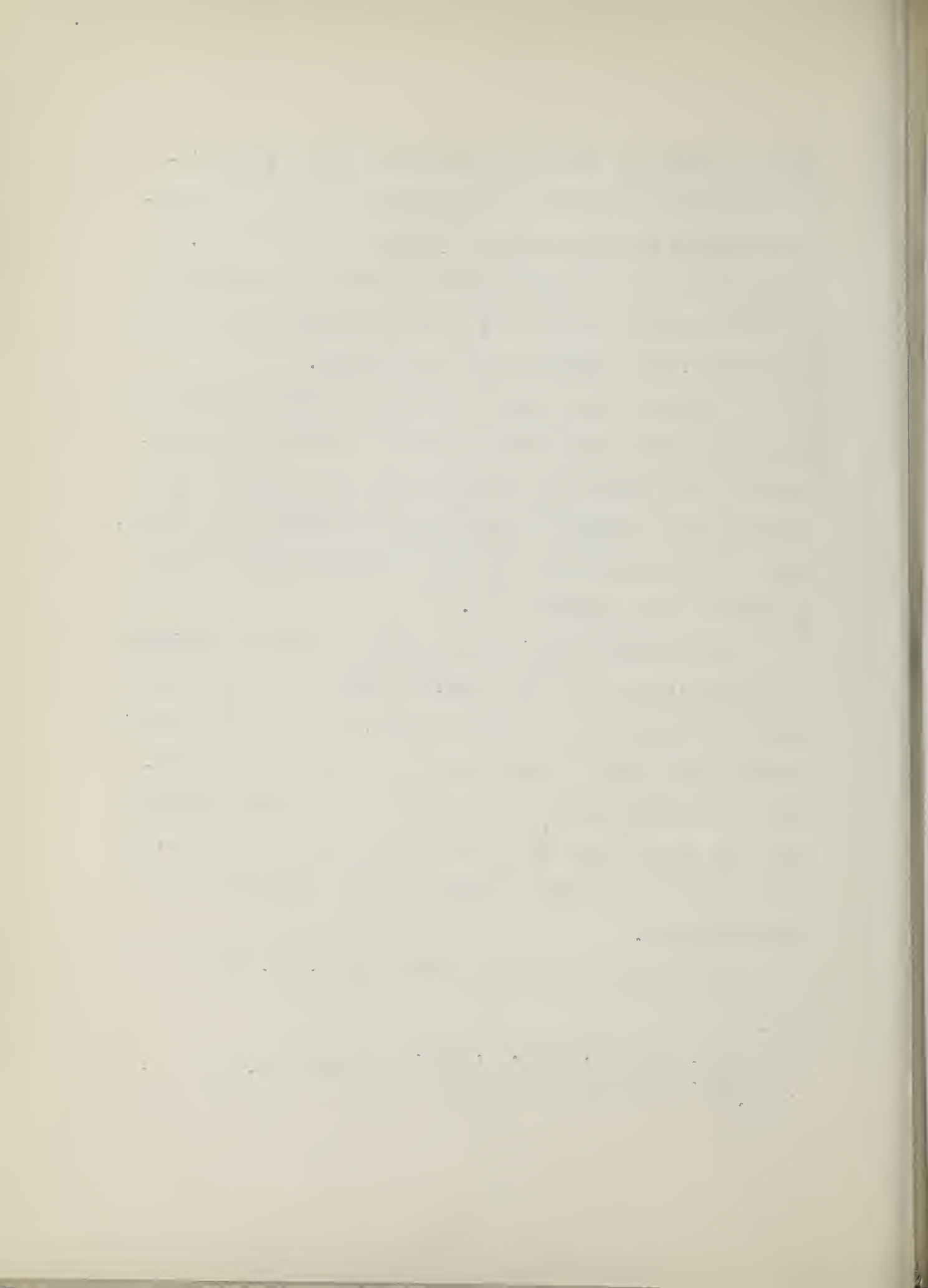
A study of the opposition to the negative voice for the magistrates shows Cotton again on the side of privilege; a side which was victorious too, although it is questionable whether his influence determined the victory. There is evidence he was not the deciding factor in the triumph of the negative vote.

In 1634 the inhabitants of Newtown wanted to migrate to Connecticut as we have seen.⁶⁵ When their desire was put to the vote of the General Court, the deputies were in favor of the move and the magistrates voted against it. There was a deadlock; the deputies did not want to admit that the magistrates had a right to negate their vote, so "the whole court agreed to keep a day of humiliation to seek the Lord."

And whether anyone else did or not, Mr. Cotton found

64. Osgood, ACSC, I, 180.

65. This paragraph based on Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 133f.



the Lord. The next day he preached before the Court session, explaining to his hearers that the magistrates had a negative voice; it was to be clearly seen in Haggai 2:4. "And it so pleased the Lord to assist him...that the affairs of the court went on cheerfully."⁶⁶ Cotton seems to have had an ability to sway people momentarily by his speeches but not the power to bring them permanently to his position.

Years later when Cotton's parishioner was brought to Court over the sow he allegedly killed illegally, the negative voice of the magistrates was again the object of much discontent. The deputies held Keayne guilty and the magistrates upheld his innocence.⁶⁷ In the end Keayne was cleared of the charge. The upshot of the whole affair was that two years later the Court decided to meet in two bodies. Thus the contention of the magistrates was sustained.⁶⁸

During the Keayne trial, while the arguments were flying, we read

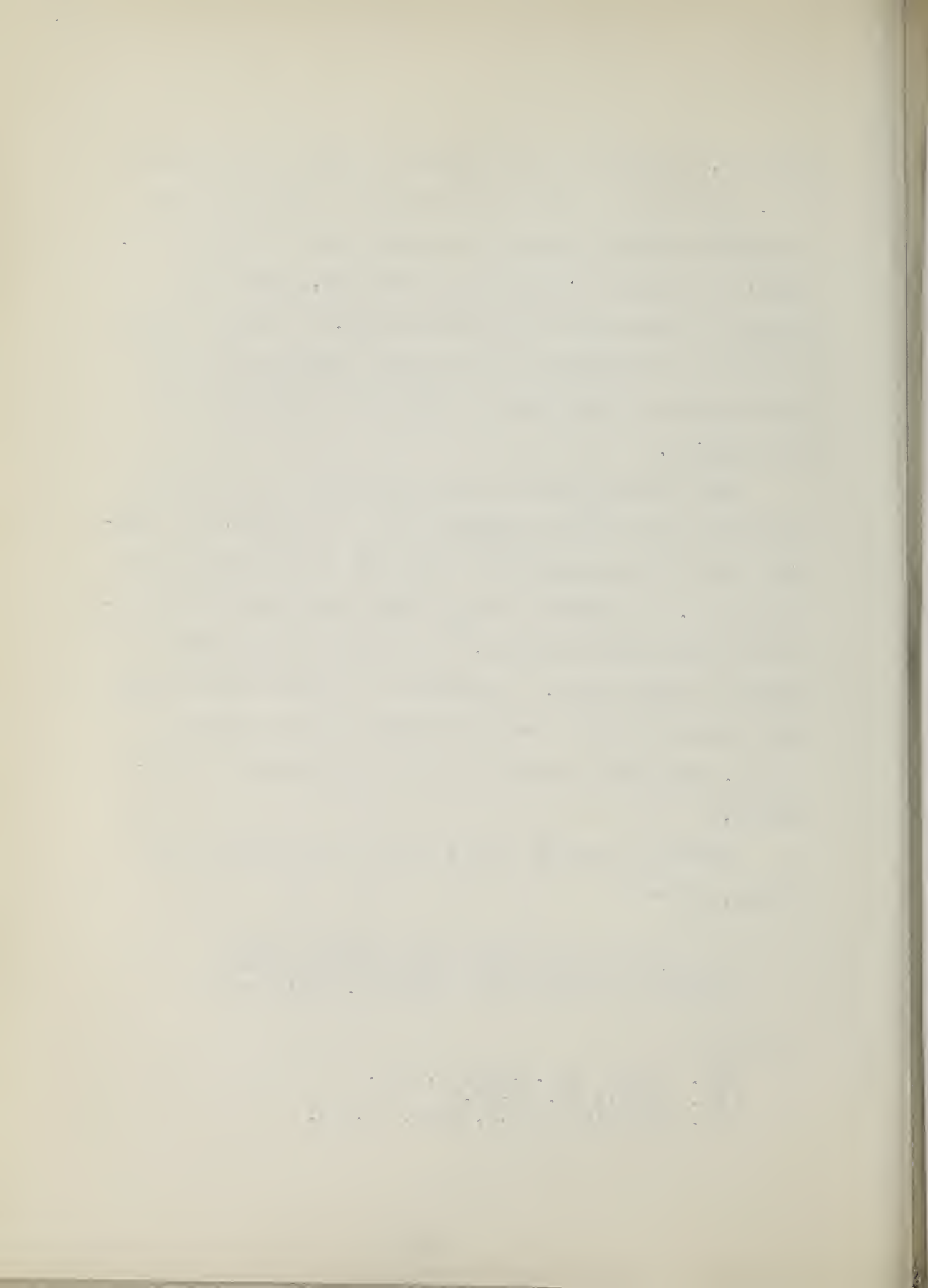
One of the elders also wrote a small treatise wherein scholastically and religiously he handled the question, laying down

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66. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 133.

67. Ibid., II, 64-65.

68. Shurtleff (ed.), RGCM, II, 58.



the several forms of government, and the unavoidable change into a democracy, if the negative voice were taken away.⁶⁹

That was probably Cotton. There is no indication that he persuaded any of the deputies. Probably of more influence was the activity of Winthrop, who was Governor at this time. He wrote a treatise on the question, repeating the charge that abolition of the negative voice would reduce the government to the level of "a mere Democratic."⁷⁰ However, Winthrop in his Journal does admit that

It was the magistrates' only care to gain time, that so the people's heat might be abated, for then they knew they would hear reason, and that the advice of the elders might be interposed.⁷¹

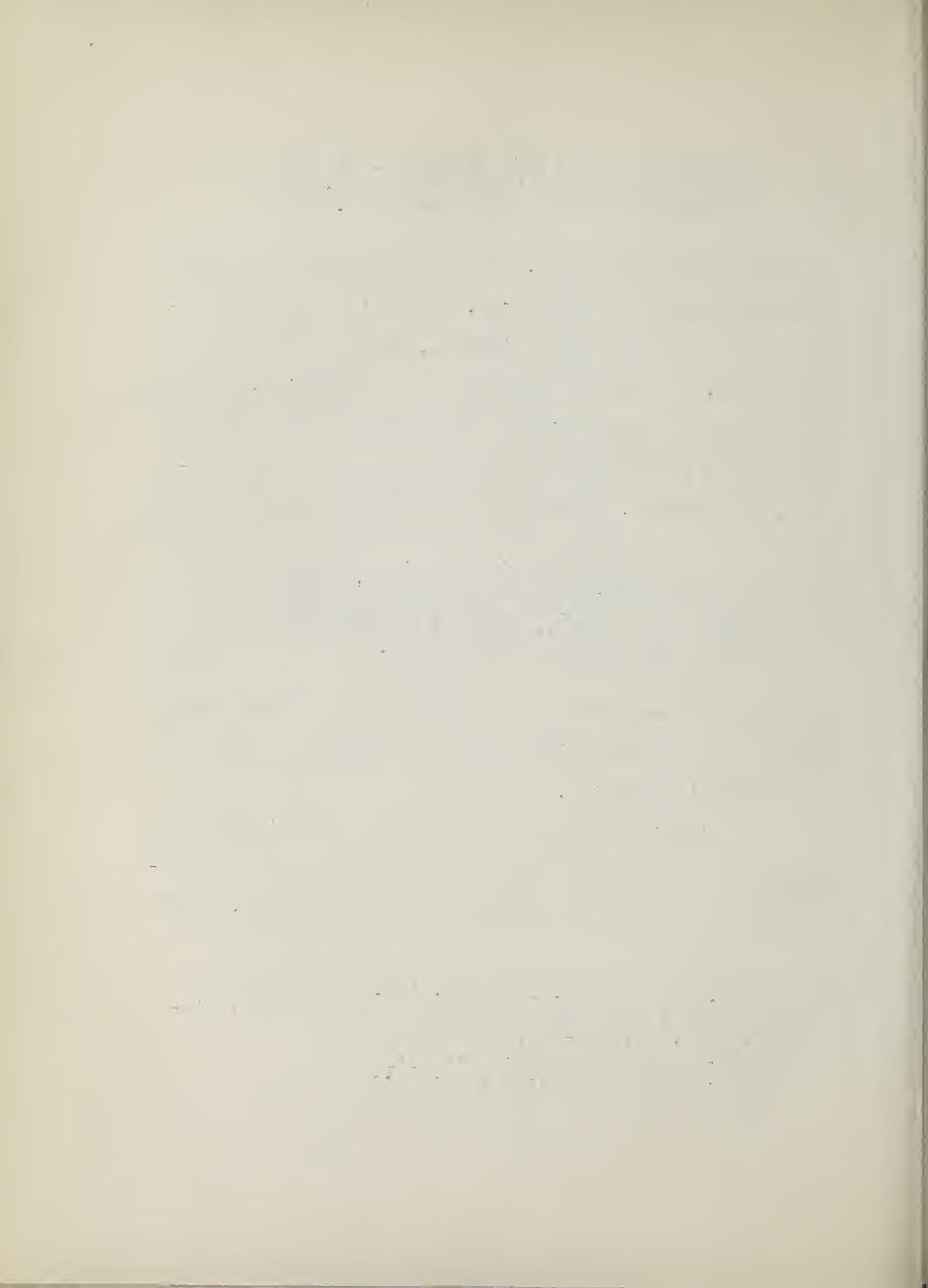
The magistrates maintained the upper hand because they held it in the beginning and were powerful enough to retain their position.

A sidelight on the influence of Cotton is that in the course of the trial, although the plaintiff was permitted by the court to describe the sow she lost, Keayne,

69. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 121. Winthrop also wrote a tract expressing the same view as Cotton; Winthrop, LLJW, II, 427-438.

70. Winthrop, LLJW, II, 429.

71. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 121.



"although propounded in the court by Mr. Cotton" that such was his right, was not allowed to describe the sow that he killed.⁷² In fairness to Cotton it must be mentioned there was a strong prejudice against Keayne by reason of his wealth and the fact that it was obtained by close business deals.

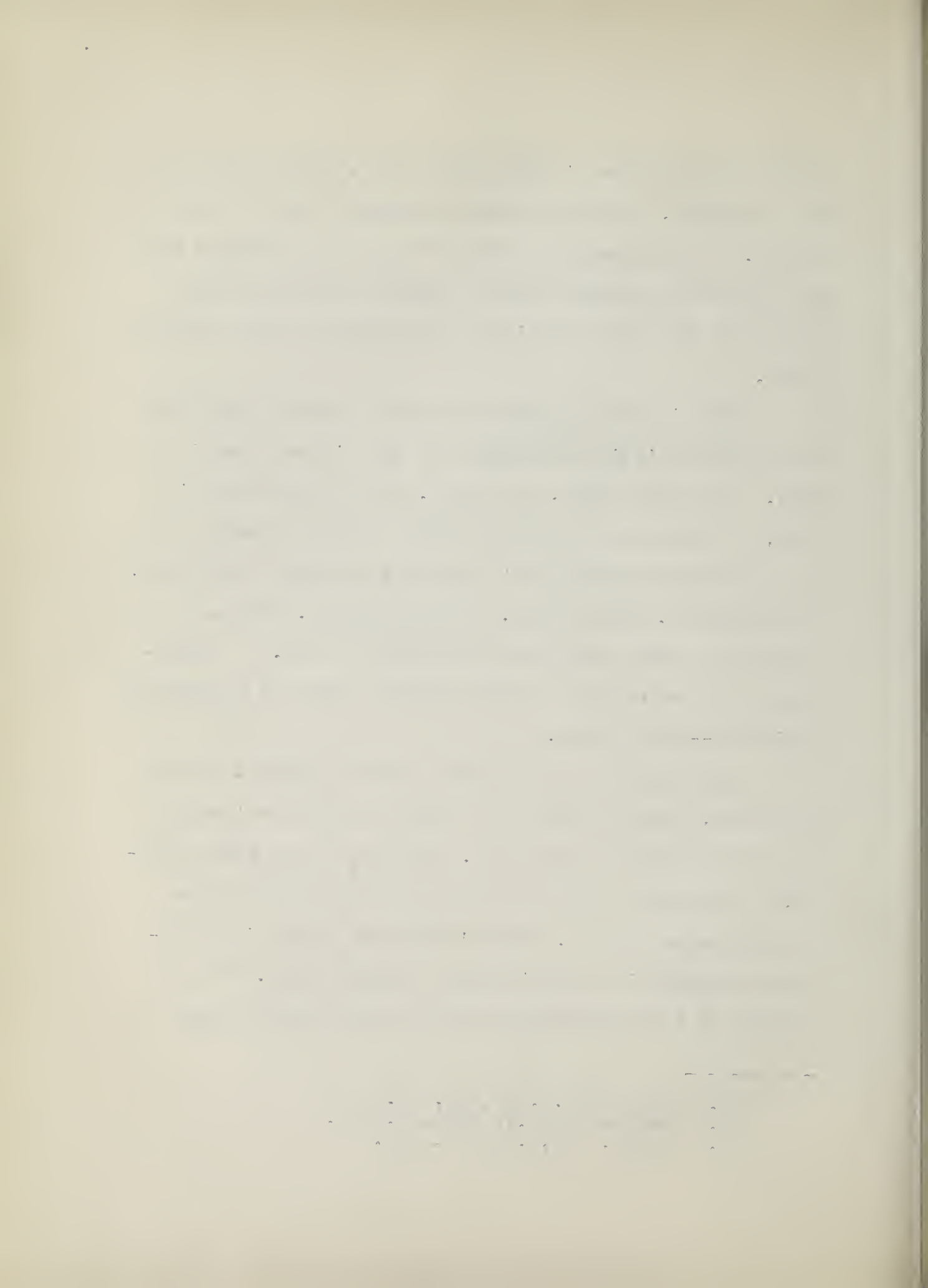
There is nothing unnatural about the fact that the colony turned to its clergymen for help in drafting its laws. The Bible would, of course, have a large part in them, and who knew the Bible better than the clergy? In May, 1636 the General Court requested Governor Henry Vane, John Winthrop, John Cotton, and some others, "To make a draught of lawes agreeable to the Word of God."⁷³ Apparently only one member of the committee took the commission seriously--John Cotton.

In October of the same year Cotton appeared before the Court, having labored all summer on what he thought the law of the land should be, "compiled in an exact method." We do not know but we can guess how he felt when someone moved that Mr. Cotton's laws be "taken into further consideration till the next General Court."⁷⁴ And how did he feel when General Court after General Court

72. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 65.

73. Shurtleff (ed.), RCGM, I, 174.

74. Hosmer, (ed.), WJ, I, 196.



went by and his laws were not accepted? If, as one tradition has asserted, Cotton in his code "had done little more than embody in written form the existing ecclesiastical and civil organization, laws and practices of Massachusetts Bay", the refusal of the General Court to accept the code is hard to understand.⁷⁵

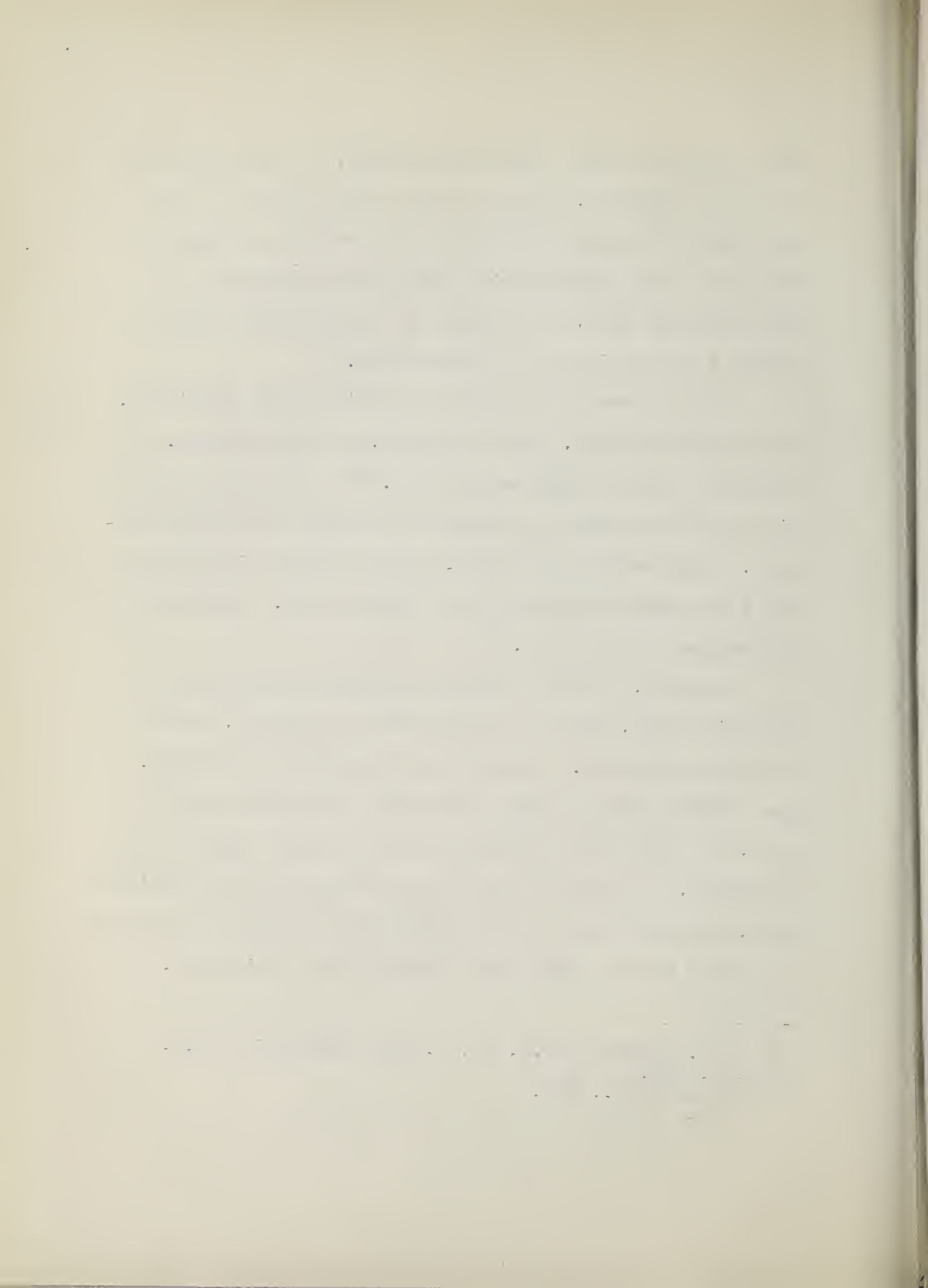
After a year and a half "a committee was appointed, of some magistrates, some ministers, and some others, to compile a body of fundamental laws."⁷⁶ But this committee did not fare so well as Cotton; it produced no fruit whatever. Apparently the group was too large and its members could not agree; "whatever was done by some, was disliked and neglected by others."⁷⁷

Finally, in 1639 the Court requested Cotton and Nathaniel Ward, pastor of the church at Ipswich, to get to work on the job. Each of them framed his own model. One wonders whether Cotton compiled a whole new set of laws, or just dusted off his old set so long neglected by the Court. At any rate the two completed the task assigned them, and the laws of each in abbreviated form were sent to the towns in the colony for inspection and criticism. It

75. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 262; Shurtleff (ed.), RGCM, I, 222.

76. Ibid., 323.

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was Ward's compilation and not Cotton's which finally won the day.⁷⁸ Winthrop records that Ward had been "a student and practiser in the course of common law," and that probably weighed in his favor.⁷⁹ In fact Ward studied law in England for seven years, and he claimed to have read almost all of the common law of England.⁸⁰

It is apparent that Ward was popular with people. His biographer tells us that Ward's "high sense of justice and his legal training made him their champion."⁸¹ That is certainly a plausible interpretation of the fact that in June 1641, some of the freemen invited Ward to preach at the annual court of elections.⁸² Winthrop records in his Journal that the invitation was extended "without the consent of the magistrates or governor", and the implication is that Ward would not have been their choice.

Although Ward's compilation triumphed over Cotton's, his laws were not in effect long. After three years the deputies agitated for a revision of the code. The work was carried on for two years and a half and done with the aid of certain English law books which were imported for the

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- 78. Whitmore, C.M, 8.
- 79. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II. 49.
- 80. Harvey, NW, 18, 131.
- 81. Ibid., 127.
- 82. Winthrop, II, 35, 36.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then proceeds to discuss the various factors that have shaped the development of the United States, including the role of the government, the influence of the economy, and the impact of the culture. The author concludes by stating that the study of the history of the United States is a vital part of the education of every citizen.

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purpose.⁸³

A comparison of Ward's "Body of Liberties" with the laws Cotton offered in 1636, which we may assume were substantially the same as his 1639 version, reveals that Cotton's compilation was the harsher of the two.⁸⁴ Cotton's laws list twenty-four crimes punishable by death or banishment; Ward has only thirteen. However, Cotton's are repetitious. For Example, the second item under Chapter Seven, "On Crimes" reads, "Idolatry to be punished with death," and the sixth item reads, "To worship God in a molten or graven image, to be punished with death." Those sound like one and the same thing.

Two other extracts illustrate the severity of the laws.

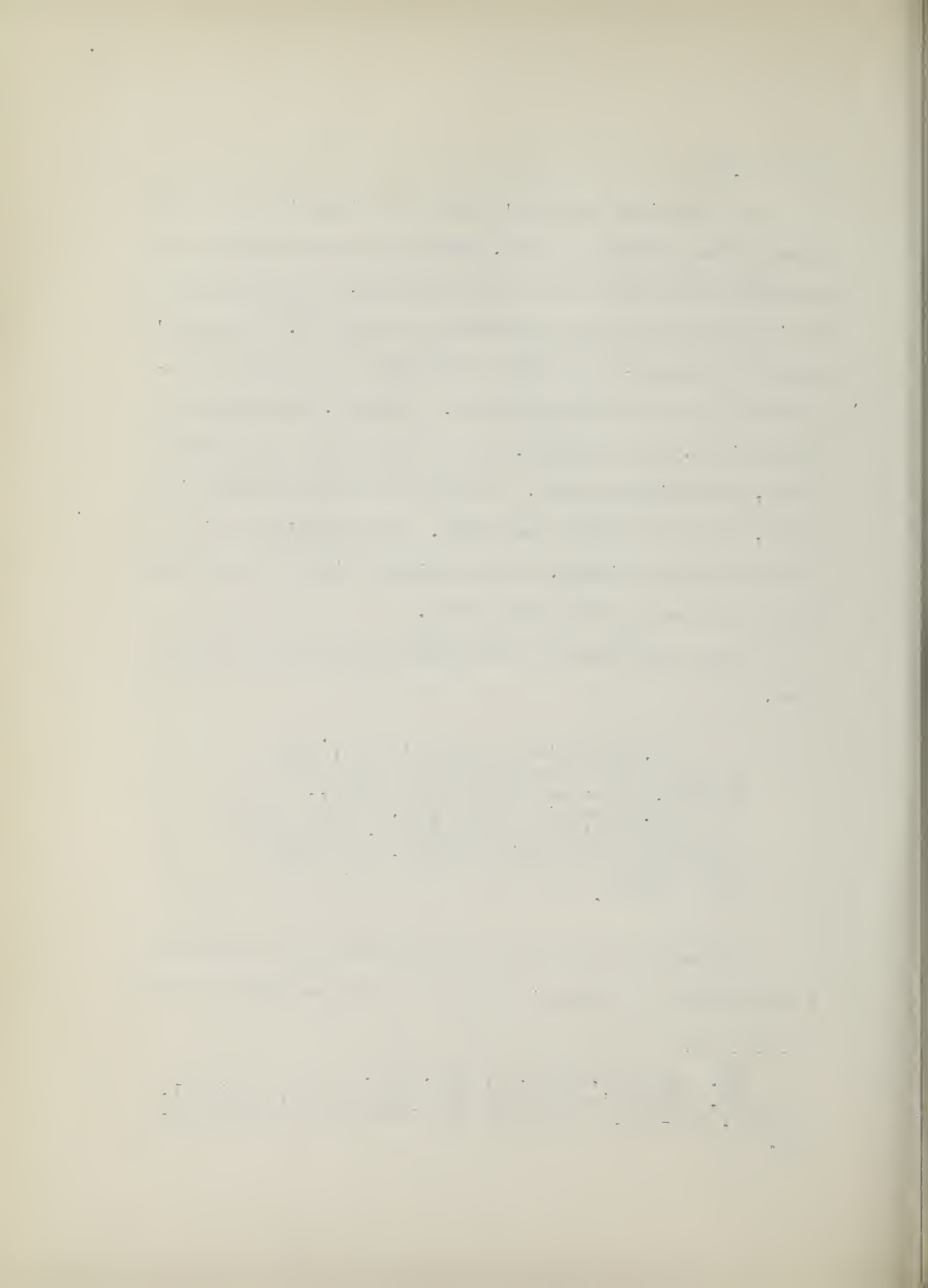
11. Profaning the Lord's day, in a careless and scornful neglect or contempt thereof, to be punished with death...

16. Rebellious children, whether they continue in riot or drunkenness, after due correction from their parents, or whether they curse or smite their parents, to be put to death.

Professor Morison has suggested that the reason for the rejection of Cotton's laws is not to be found in their

83. Andrews, CPAH, I, 456, 457.

84. Cotton's laws are printed in MHSC, Series 1, V(1798), 173-187. "The Body of Liberties" in Whitmore, CLM.



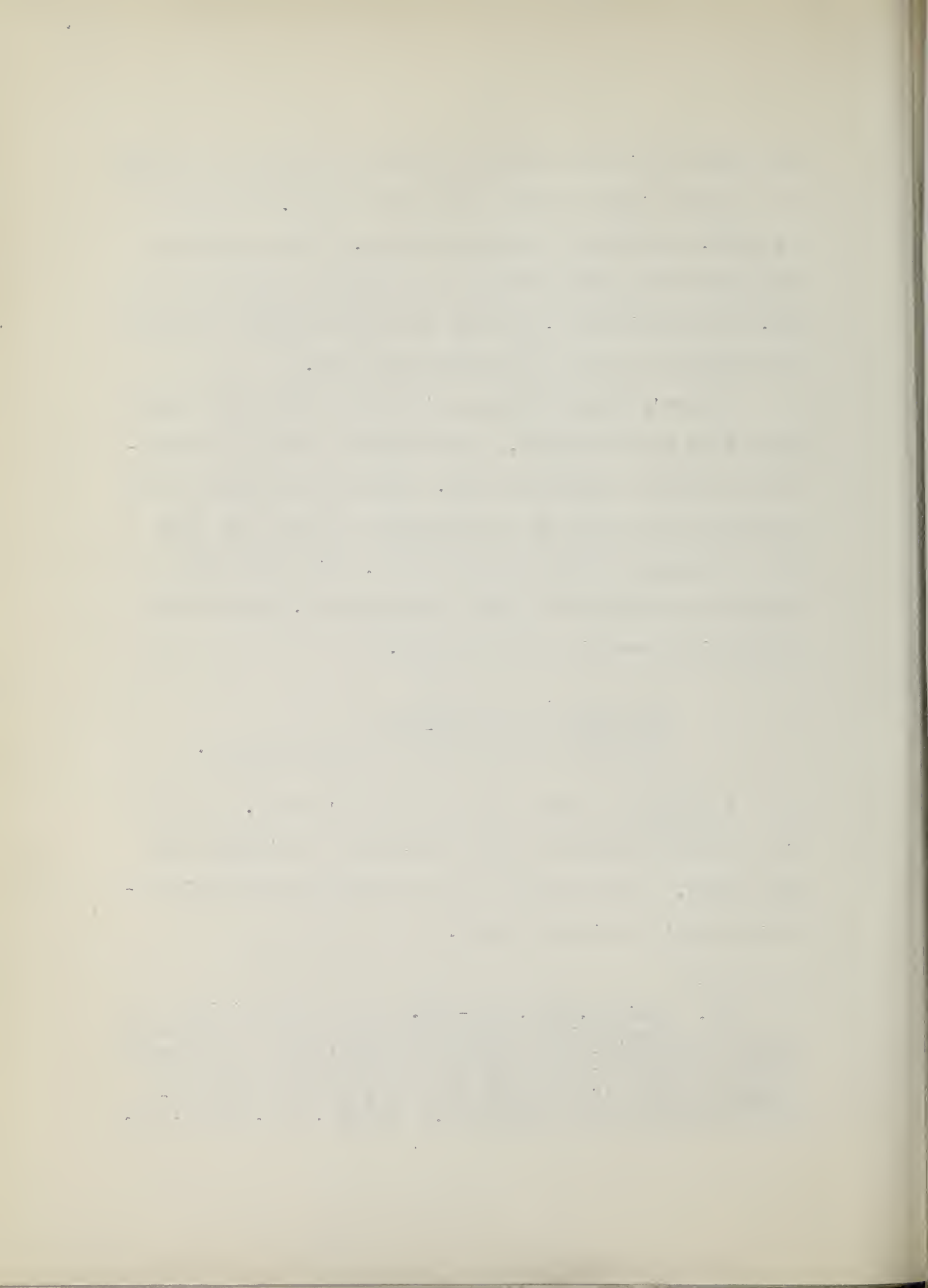
harshness but in the fact that Cotton tried to slip across his favorite idea of life tenure for office.⁸⁵ Early in the laws, speaking of the magistrates, Cotton contends: "Because these great affairs of the state cannot be attended, nor administered, if they be often changed; therefore the counsellors are to be chosen for life."

Cotton's laws look more like the product of a clergyman than those of Ward. Even the most cruel is supported by Biblical justifications. Along the margins of his proposals were Scriptural references to prove the laws were in harmony with the word of God. His texts are drawn almost wholly from the Old Testament, and he concludes his piece with Isaiah 32:22.

The Lord is our Judge
The Lord is our Law-giver
The Lord is our King: He will save us.

But the people were the Judge of Cotton's laws, and they did not want Cotton for their law-giver or his Lord for their King. They wanted to rule themselves and feel salvation was in their own hands.

85. Morison, BBC, 228-229. It is the opinion of Professor Isabel Calder that the Cotton code was rejected because "much space was devoted to outlining a government already outlined in the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company and but little space to the legislation so urgently needed by Massachusetts." Calder, Art.(1931), 88.



Although of little influence in Massachusetts, Cotton's draft of laws were to be the fundamental law in Connecticut, where they were taken by his friend John Davenport.⁸⁶ The code also served another group. A group of settlers in 1640 went from Lynn, Massachusetts to Southampton, Long Island. The group, under the leadership of Abraham Pierson, carried a copy of the Cotton Code with them and it was accepted as the basis of their plantation government.⁸⁷

Although Cotton's compilation of laws was rejected, he did have a little to do with the compilation of 1648 which replaced Ward's laws. Cotton never lost his prestige with Winthrop. And when the laws of 1648 were about to be published, Winthrop apparently sent them, or at least their preface, to his teacher-pastor and asked him for his opinion. Cotton wrote back: "Two things only I could wish considered with some caution: one in ye Preamble, the other in ye Conclusion."⁸⁸ Then follow Cotton's suggested changes.

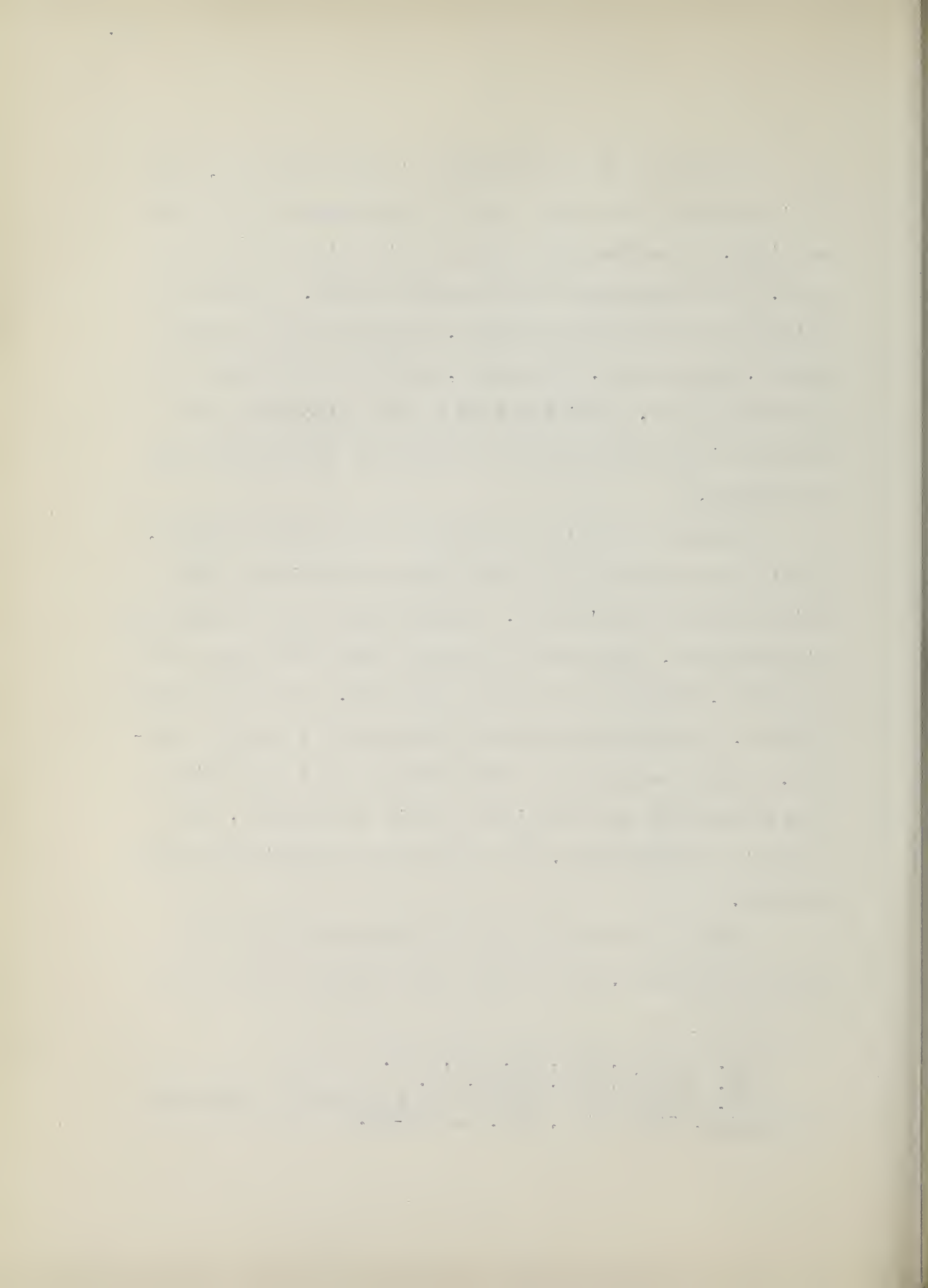
Since we do not possess the preface to the laws which Cotton read, we can only guess how much was altered

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86. Calder, NHC, 51. 121, 122.

87. Calder, Art.(1931). 92.

88. The letter is printed Massachusetts Historical Collection, 5th Series, Vol. I, 356-58.



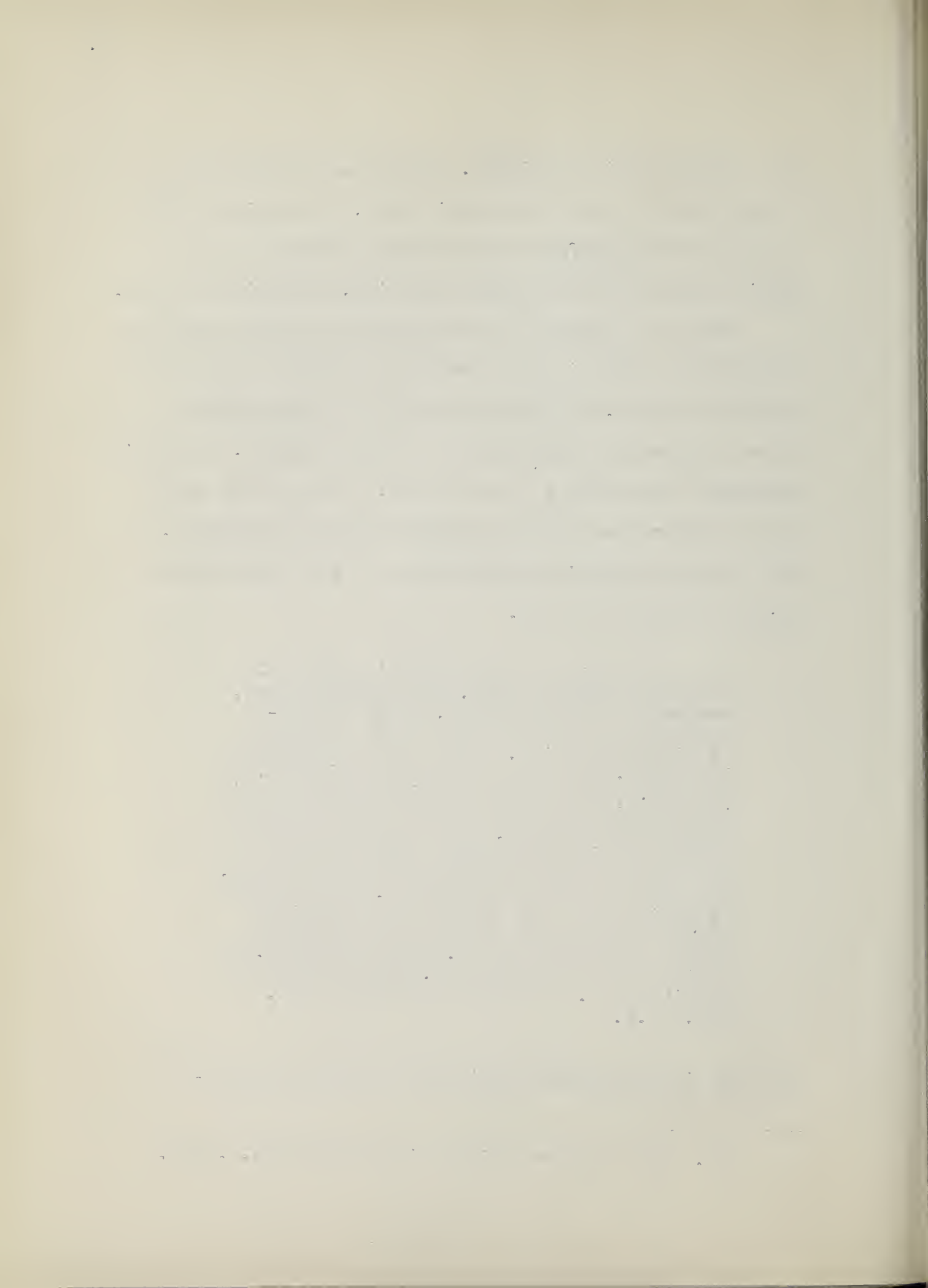
as a result of his criticism. However, his suggested changes seem to have been carried out. He desired first of all that the preface should state clearly that the Mosaic laws were of continual validity, and this was done.

There are changes in the phrasing and some omission of scripture texts in the preamble as printed and as suggested by Cotton, but on the whole his recommendation seems to have been incorporated in the document. Cotton's suggested conclusion to the preface, on the other hand, seems to have been accepted almost bodily by Winthrop. Here follows Cotton's suggestion as to how the passage might be amended to read.

That distinction which is putt betweene ye lawes of God, & ye lawes of men, becometh a snare to many, as it is misapplied in ye ordering of their obedience to civil authority. For when ye authority is of God, (& yt in way of an ordinance. Rom. 13.1) and when ye administration of it is according to deductions & rules gathered from ye word of God, & ye cleare light of nature in civill nations; surely there is noe humane law yt tendeth to ye comon good, according to those principles, but ye same is mediately a law of God: & ye administration of justice & all lawful acts of power according thereto, is of God also, & yt in way of an ordinance, which all are to submitt unto, even for conscience sake. Rom. 13.5.

And here is the passage as it was actually printed.⁸⁹

89. The laws are printed in Farrand (ed.), BLL.

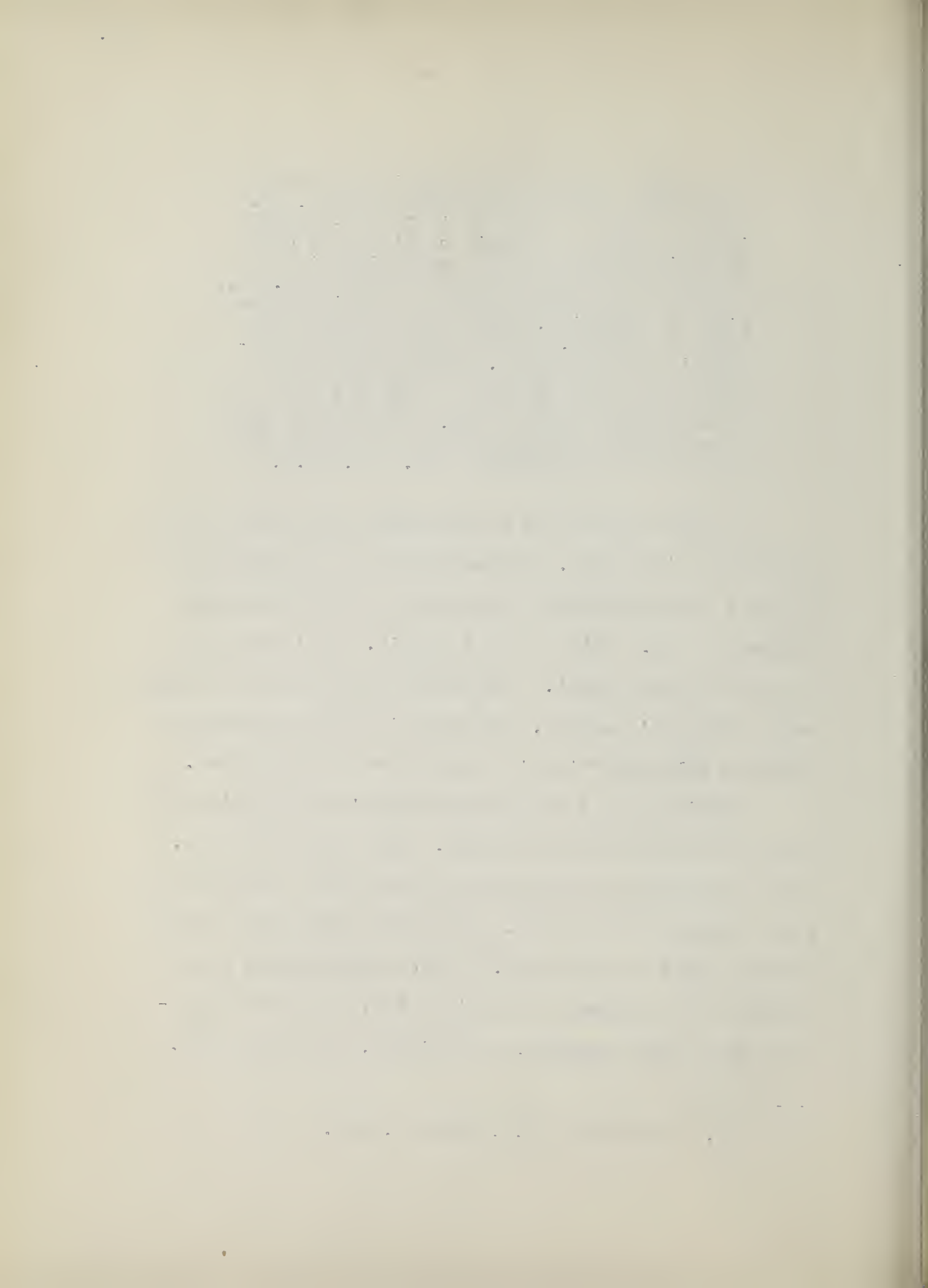


That distinction which is put between the Lawes of God and the lawes of men, becomes a snare to many as it is mis-applied in the ordering of their obedience to civil Authoritie; for when the Authoritie is of God and that in way of an Ordinance Rom. 13.1 and when the administration of it is according to deduction, and rules gathered from the word of God, and the clear light of nature in civil nations, surely there is no humane law that tendeth to common good (according to those principles) but the same is mediately a law of God, and that in way of an Ordinance which all are to submit unto and that for conscience sake. Rom. 13.5.

A comparison of the two passages shows them to be practically identical. Cotton wanted it expressly said that the administration of justice and all legal power derived of God. This was left unsaid, but it was an accepted Puritan tenet. The letter from Cotton was found among Winthrop's papers, and there is little doubt that Winthrop welcomed Cotton's suggestions and used them.

Mention should be made of Cotton's association with the founding of Harvard College. When on November 26, 1637 a committee was appointed by the Court "to take order for a college at Newtowne," John Cotton was one of twelve members named to the group.⁹⁰ The committee was equally composed of clergymen and magistrates; among the ministers were Thomas Shepard, John Wilson, and Hugh Peter.

90. Shurtleff (ed.), RCGM, I, 217.



Cotton was an overseer of the College from this time until he died in 1652.⁹¹

There is little evidence as to the part Cotton played within the organization of the Overseers. The early history of this body is veiled in darkness; we have the record of only one meeting of the Board before 1650.⁹² It would be pleasant to think of him as being the moving spirit behind the foundation of the college, but we have no justification for such a thought.

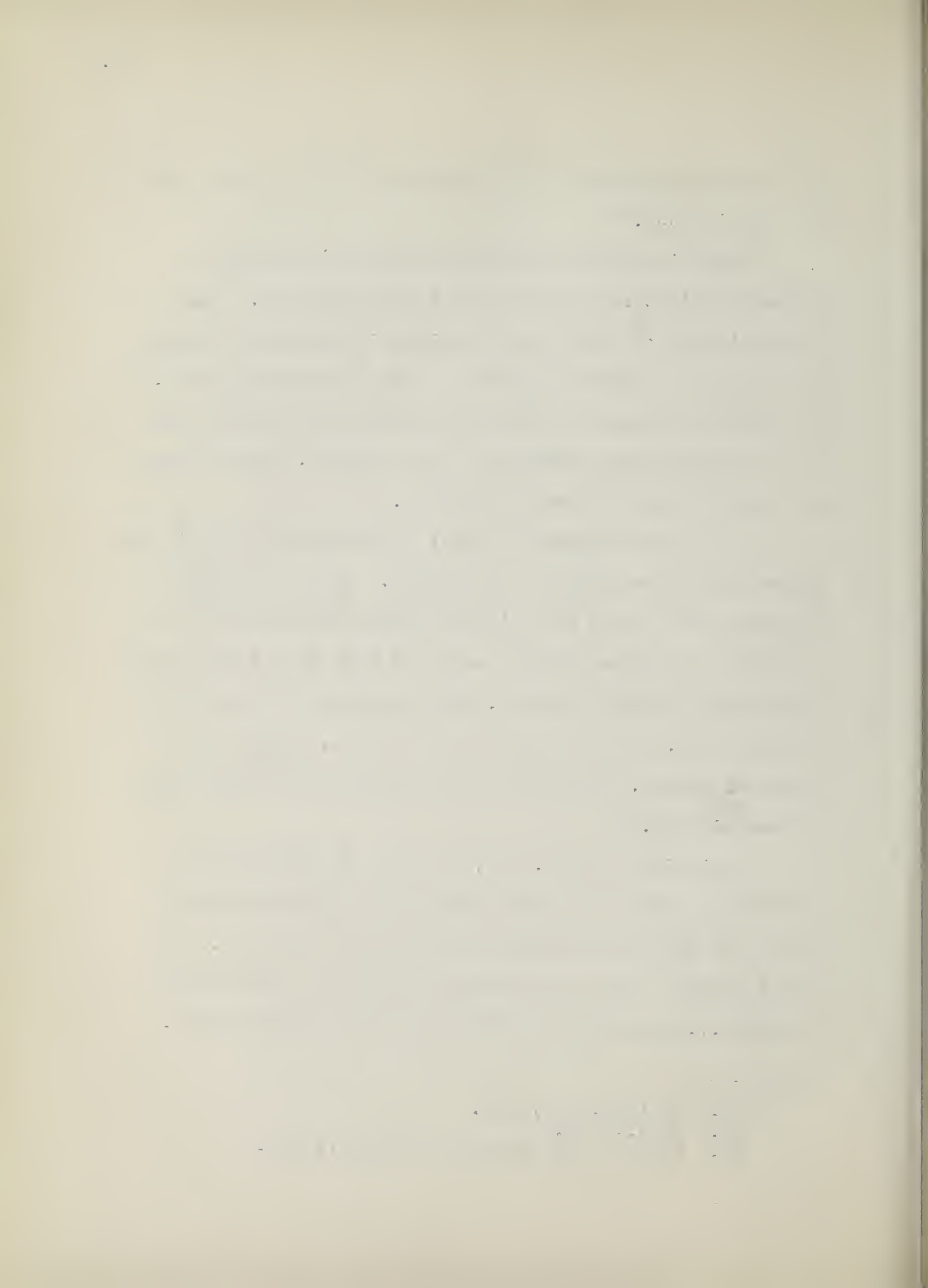
We do know he seems to have figured not at all in the selection of the site for the school. More determinative than any other one factor in the choice of Newtown as the location of the new college seems to have been the powerful preaching of Thomas Shepard, who was pastor of the church in that town, and "of whom it may be said, without any wrong to others, the Lord by his ministry hath saved many a hundred soul."⁹³

It is interesting, too, that the Overseers were elected by reason of their respective offices and not by reason of their individual capacities for the task. The Court ordered that the Overseers should be "the Governor & Deputy...and all the magistrates of the jurisdiction,

91. Morison, FHC, 373.

92. Ibid., 328.

93. Edward Johnson quoted in *ibid.*, 183.



together with the teaching elders of the sixe adjoyning towns."⁹⁴ That is, John Cotton was elected an overseer of Harvard not because he was John Cotton, but because he happened to be the teaching elder in a town close to the college site.

Whether we can discern the degree to which Cotton helped in the formulation of Harvard's policies or not, we can assume he took an active interest in its work. One of his last acts was to preach to the students of the college on the text Isaiah 54:13, "Thy children shall be all taught of the Lord."⁹⁵

One last instance of Cotton's influence in civil affairs must be noticed. In 1634 the inhabitants of Boston met to elect seven men who were to divide the town lands. In the election two prominent citizens were slighted; John Winthrop was elected by one vote and William Coddington was not elected at all. Both were magistrates and pillars of the Boston church. Winthrop says the electors feared that men of means would "leave a great part [of the land] at liberty for new comers and for common, which Mr. Winthrop had oft persuaded them unto, as best for the

 94. Shurtleff (ed.), RGCM, II, 30; Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 152.

95. Mather, MCA, I, 271.

town."⁹⁶ Cotton, always the aristocrat, was offended at the outcome of this election, as was Winthrop, who refused to serve.

Whereupon at the motion of Mr. Cotton, who showed them, that it was the Lord's order among the Israelites to have all such business committed to the elders...they all agreed to go to a new election, which was referred to the next election day.⁹⁷

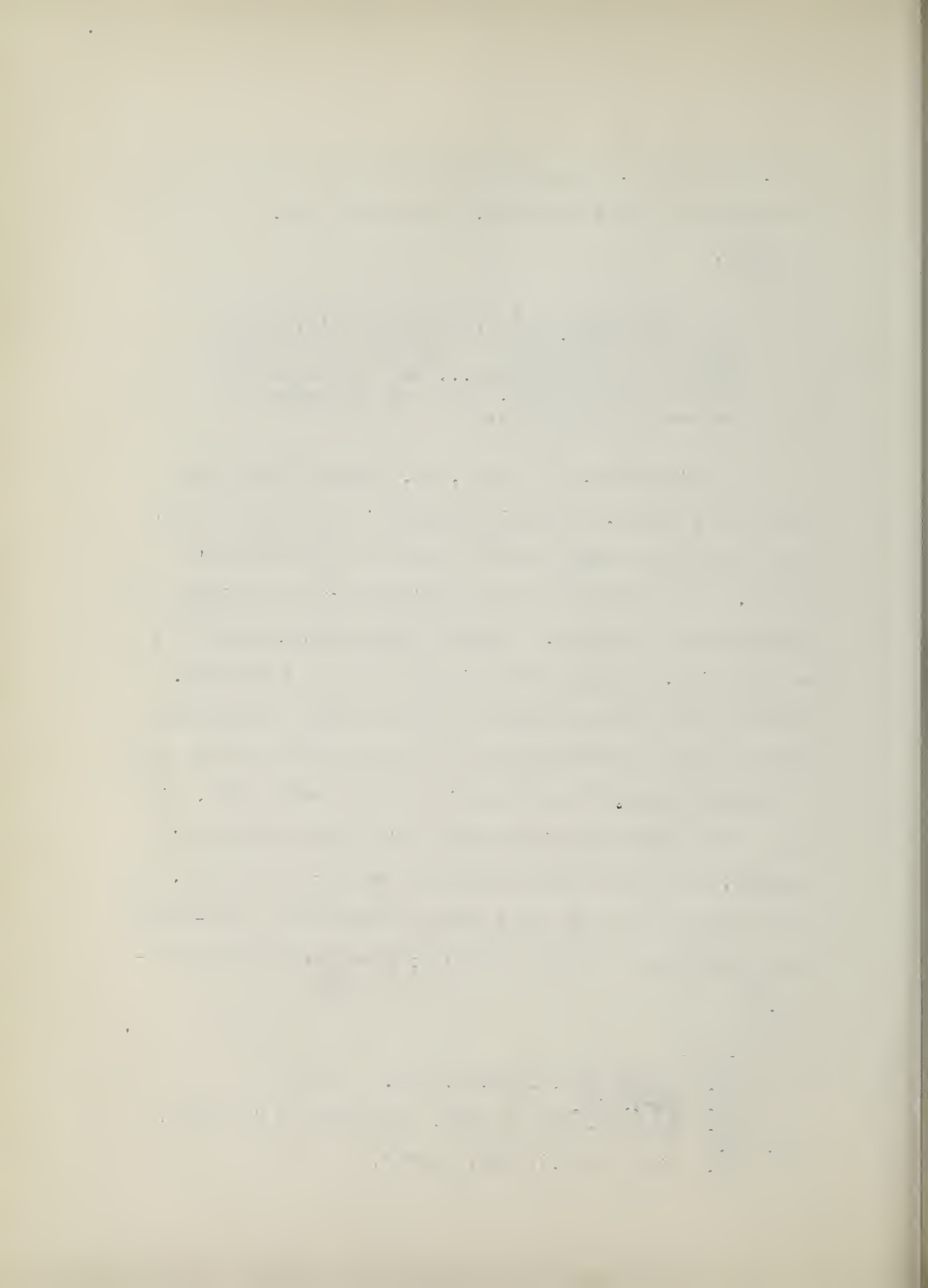
At which time, of course, Mr. Cotton would again mount the rostrum. Probably Winthrop's refusal to serve had as much influence with the voters as did Cotton's speech, though Winthrop in his modesty would attribute the new election to Cotton. Winthrop says nothing about the new election, but apparently it was held as scheduled. The decision of the citizens to have a new election has been regarded as instrumental in the setting aside of land as Boston Common.⁹⁸ Although it was not until 1640, six years after the foregoing passage cited from Winthrop's Journal, that the Common became a fixed tract of land, the fact that John Cotton had a ready tongue and a well-marked Bible may be part of the reason we have Boston Common today.⁹⁹

96. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 143.

97. Loc. cit.

98. Palfrey. HNE, I, 379. (Referred to in Ellis. HFC, 34.)

99. Winsor (ed.), MHB, I, 517.



CHAPTER V

INFLUENCE OF COTTON IN CHURCH AFFAIRS

There can be no denying that Cotton was influential in the work of the Church in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was, as we have seen, a powerful preacher. An early colonial historian writes of him:

Mr. Cotton had such an insinuating and melting way in his preaching, that he would usually [but not always] carry his very adversary captive after the triumphant chariot of his rhetoric.¹

This same author later gives an example. Cotton was in Salem on the Lord's day and he was struck and disgusted by the fact that all the women wore veils. Therefore:

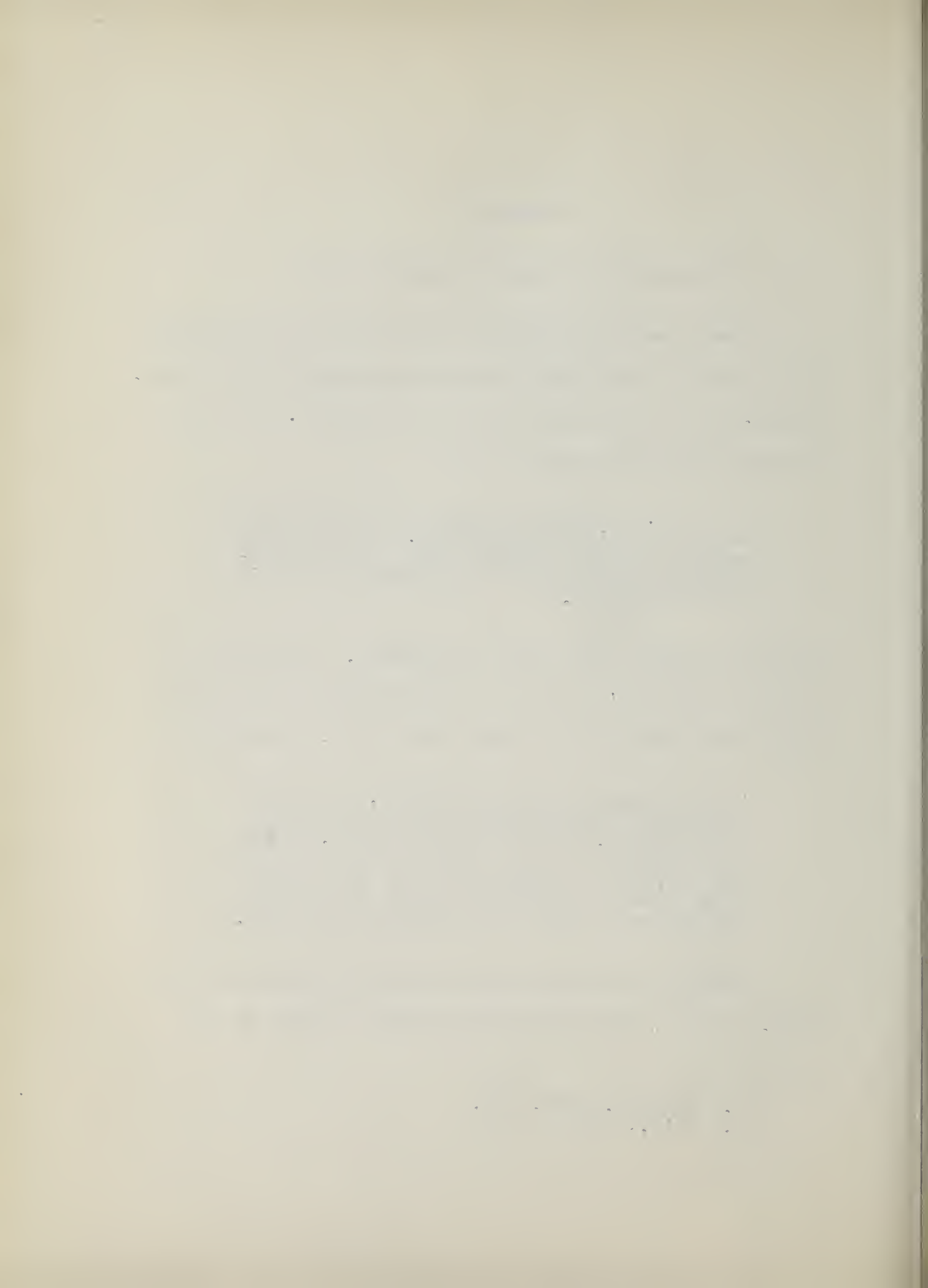
in his exercise in the forenoon, he by his doctrine so enlightened most of the women of the place, that it unveiled them, so as they appeared in the afternoon without their veils...they who before thought it a shame to be seen in publick without a veil were ashamed ever after to be covered with them.²

Simply because Cotton was opposed to veils did not mean, however, that everyone thought as he did or was

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1. Hubbard, *GHNE*, 175.

2. *Ibid.*, 205.



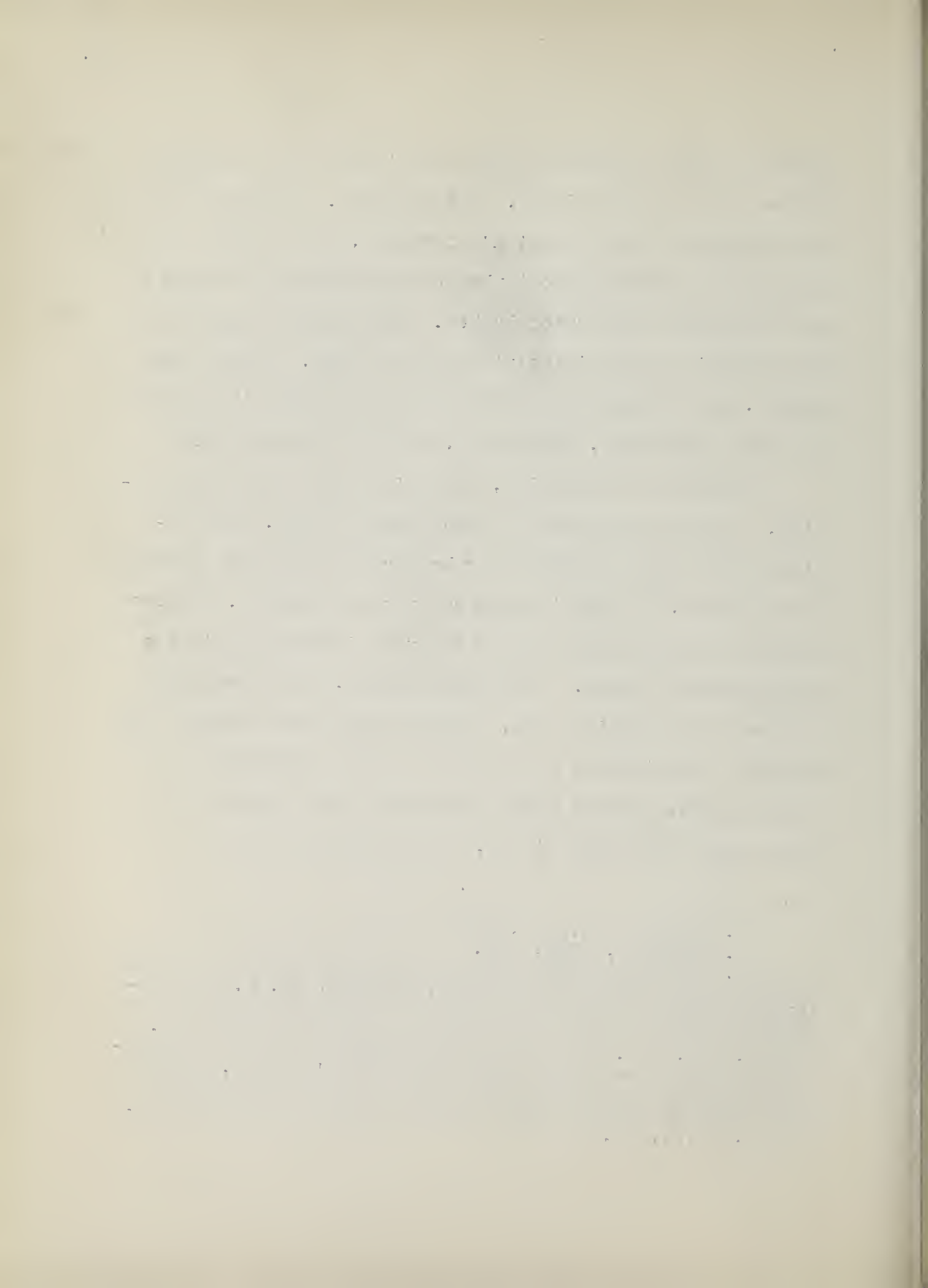
swayed by his eloquence; there was at least one prominent person who was unconvinced, John Endicott. He brought the question up at one of Cotton's lectures, and the pair got in quite an argument about whether women should or should not put their light under bushel. Endicott was unmoved by the rhetoric of the illustrious John Cotton. "After some debate, the governor [John Winthrop] perceiving it to grow to some earnestness, interposed, and so it broke off."³

Besides his preaching, Cotton's church gave him prestige. In his time some had been "heard to say, they believed the church of Boston to be the most glorious church in the world."⁴ That is perhaps an overstatement, but the church at Boston was probably the most influential in the Massachusetts colony. The Boston church, like the church at Rome in an earlier time, (Cotton would have detested the analogy) was situated at the seat of the government of the commonwealth, and the church returned to its teacher as much renown as he gave to it.⁵ In 1636 he writes:

3. Hosmer (ed.), I, 120.

4. Hubbard, *GHNE*, 280.

5. "The Holy Ghost puts no difference between Popish Pagancie and Heathenish Pagancie." Cotton, *CR*, 5. "A Popish Catholicke that lives according to his religion and no better lives and dies in a state of death and damnation." Cotton, *PSV*, 27f. On a trip from Plymouth to Boston Governor Winthrop came upon a place called Hue's Cross, which name he changed to Hue's Folly that the Papists might not have occasion to say their religion was just planted here. Hosmer, *WJ*, I, 94.



till I gett some release from constant labors here (which the church is desirous to procure) I can get litle, or noe oppertunity to reade anything or attend to anything, but the dayly occurences which press in upon me continually, much beyond my strength of body or minde.⁶

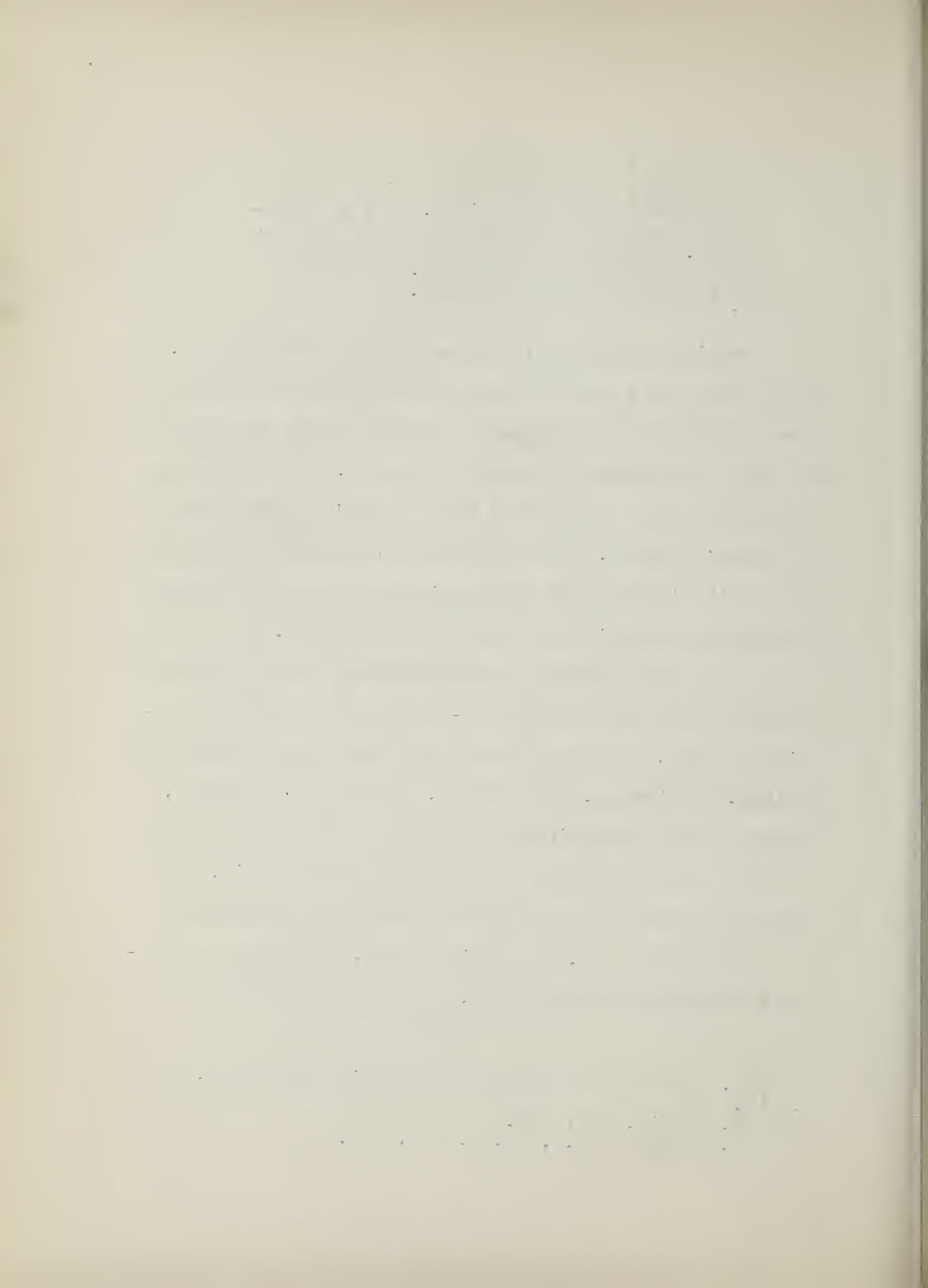
Despite the pressing claims of his famous church, Cotton was able to bear up under the strain and to find time to lecture every Thursday. Apparently he established the idea of a Thursday lecture in Boston, for we find no evidence of such a gathering in Winthrop's Journal prior to Cotton's coming. This Thursday lecture in Boston became an institution and was carried on for nearly two hundred years before it was finally discontinued.⁷

The chance to hear preachers during the week proved extremely popular, and the mid-week lecture spread to adjoining towns. In less than a year there were lectures at Newtown, Dorchester, and Roxbury, as well as at Boston, and they were all delivered on different days in order to give the people an opportunity to take them all in.⁸ This sumptuous feast for sermon tasters could not continue; it was too good to last. "It being found, that the four lectures did spend too much time, and proved over burdensome

6. Letter to Lord Say and Seal in Hutchinson, HMB, I, 414.

7. Ellis, HFC, 34f.

8. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 135, 136.



to the ministers and people," the lectures were cut in half; Mr. Cotton of Boston with Mr. Warham of Dorchester preaching one week, and Mr. Hooker of Newtown with Mr. Welde of Roxbury preaching the next week.⁹ A couple of months later, however, the weather prevented inordinate scurrying from town to town, so Mr. Cotton and Mr. Hooker could again lecture to their flocks every week.¹⁰

At his mid-week lectures the Boston teacher did not stick to simple Biblical exposition. He once used his rostrum to enunciate a code of commercial ethics, showing among other things that it is a false principle of trade "That a man might sell as dear as he can, and buy as cheap as he can."¹¹ On a different occasion he took advantage of his public hearing to plead against the dismissal of men from public office because of their age.¹² He devoted an entire series of lectures to blasting "God ruining Rome" and exposing the corruptions of Roman Catholicism.¹³ The series was printed in London under the title. The Pouring out of the Seven Vials in 1642.

We do not know exactly when these lectures on Popery were given, but internal evidence would indicate that they

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- 9. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 135, 136.
- 10. Ibid., 140.
- 11. Ibid., 317.
- 12. Ibid., II, 73.
- 13. Cotton, PSV, 12.

were delivered a few years before, when Cotton was interested in having the laws he had framed for the colony adopted. The following extract certainly sounds as though he was stumping for "Moses his Judicials," the laws he compiled in 1636 and re-wrote in 1639.¹⁴ This appears the more probable when it is remembered that his audience was in part composed of the legislators of the colony.

Law-givers and Law-makers, should ever have respect what doth the Lord our God say; If it be God's law, and Gods will, let it be established; if not let it be antiquated: But if you can finde a hinte from the Law of God for it, let it stand...The fift(h) Use that you may make of this Point, is, to teach you a tender respect in all Lawes to the Judicials of Moses, to all the judicall laws of Moses, that are built upon morall equitie... I say therefore look what was the Law of God by Moses, if it were of perpetuall reason and equitie, it lyes on every Commonwealth to establish it.¹⁵

But his listeners were not persuaded.

It has been said of colonial Massachusetts that "The church was the gateway to political privilege."¹⁶ As a matter of fact, in 1631 the Court had decreed "that for time to come noe man shalbe admitted to the freedome of this body polliticke, but such as are members of some of

14. Hosmer, (ed.), WJ, I, 196.

15. Cotton, PSV, 48, 49.

16. Hilkey, LDCM, 59.

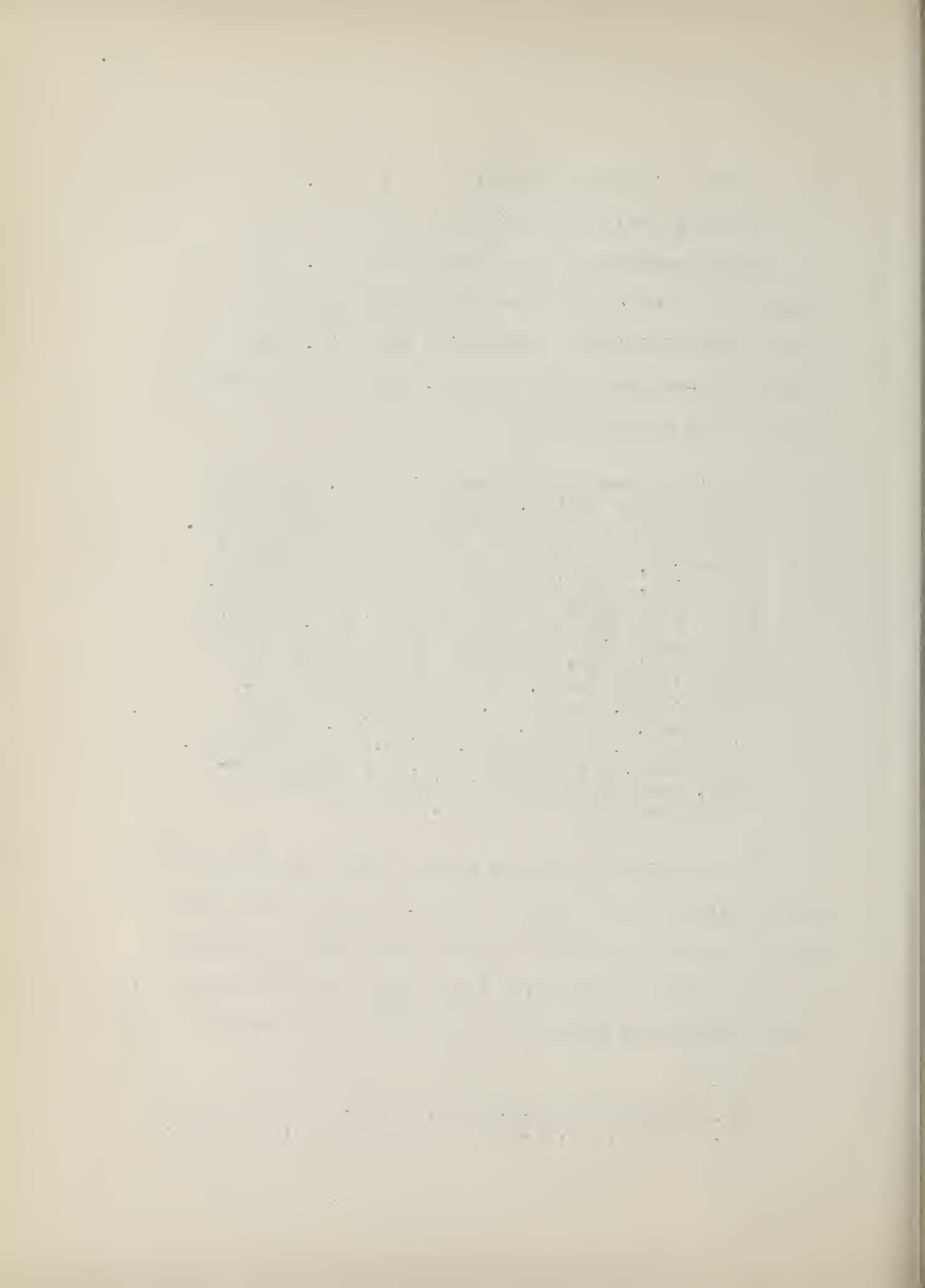
the churches within the lymitts of the same."¹⁷ The implication has been that ministers by controlling admission into church membership controlled the state. More likely stage fright scared more prespects from the bosom of the church than ministerial opposition ever did. Before the prospective-members were admitted, they had to confess in front of the congregation

how it pleased God to worke in them, to bring them home to Christ, whether the law have convinced them of sinne; how the Lord hath wonne them to deny themselves and their owne righteousness, and to rely on the righteousness of Christ, then they make a briefe confession, or else an answer to a few questions about the maine fundamentall points of Religion, that it may appeare indeed whether they be competently endured withtthe knowledge of the truth and found in the faith, and about the God-head, the Trinity, the worke, our first estate of innocency, the fall, the redemption, Christ his Natures, his Offices, Faith, the Sacraments, the Church, the Resurrection, the last judgement, such as every Christian man is bound to learne and give account of.¹⁸

The ability to pass an examination like that should have admitted one to Heaven itself. One suspects there would be far fewer people in the fold today if neophytes were required to climb over that fence before they got in. Small wonder when Cotton and his wife became members of the

17. Shurtleff (ed.), RCGM, I, 87.

18. Cotton, CL, 5. See also Lechford, PD, 132f.



Boston church, he asked that "she might not be put to make an open confession."¹⁹ As for putting a barrier between the church and the unchurched, except for the examination, Cotton contended no one was kept out of the church; "we seriously invite them (publicly and privately) to joyne with us: unless such religious persons bye under some scandall of corrupt life or Doctrine."²⁰

There is ample evidence that Cotton was a leader in the colonial church and among his fellow ministers. When Thomas Shepard came to New England in 1636 and settled in Newtown as the pastor there, it was Cotton who "in the name of their churches, gave his hand to the elder, with a short speech of their assent."²¹ When in August 1635 Richard Mather came to Boston, Thomas Hooker and John Cotton headed a council which directed Mather to settle in Dorchester.²² When Mr. Lenthall, minister at Weymouth, was in England he had been of good repute, but in America he had "imbibed some Antinomian weaknesses from where he was by conference with Mr. Cotton soon recovered."²³

Cotton seems to have been almost the prosecuting

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- 19. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 107.
- 20. Cotton, WCCC, 69.
- 21. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 174.
- 22. Mather, MCA, I, 450.
- 23. Ibid., 244. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 292.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then proceeds to a detailed examination of the early years of the Republic, from the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence to the end of the War of 1812. This section covers the political, social, and economic developments of the period, and the role of the various states in the formation of the new nation.

The second part of the paper deals with the period from 1812 to 1860. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The third part of the paper covers the period from 1860 to 1890. This was a time of rapid industrialization and urbanization. The author discusses the growth of the manufacturing sector, the development of the railroads, and the increasing importance of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The fourth part of the paper deals with the period from 1890 to 1914. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The fifth part of the paper covers the period from 1914 to 1945. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The sixth part of the paper deals with the period from 1945 to 1960. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The seventh part of the paper covers the period from 1960 to 1980. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The eighth part of the paper deals with the period from 1980 to 1990. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The ninth part of the paper covers the period from 1990 to 2000. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The tenth part of the paper deals with the period from 2000 to 2010. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The eleventh part of the paper covers the period from 2010 to 2020. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

The twelfth part of the paper deals with the period from 2020 to the present. This was a time of great change and growth for the United States. The author discusses the expansion of the territory, the development of the economy, and the increasing influence of the federal government. He also examines the social and cultural changes that were taking place, and the role of the various groups in society.

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attorney in questions of heresy. Although Captain Partidge was a moral man, his doctrine was doubtful and to Mr. Cotton was delegated the task of determining the extent of his heresy.²⁴ Early in the controversy with Roger Williams, Cotton, along with his colleague Wilson, was called in to scan the writings of Williams, watching for unorthodox opinions.²⁵ Thereafter Cotton was continually consulted with reference to Williams.

It is a commonplace of history that time has revealed Roger Williams and not John Cotton upheld the truth in their controversy over toleration. Williams claimed:

No Civill Magistrate, no King nor Caesar have any power over the Soules or Consciences of their Subjects in the matters of God...the Spirit of God never intended to direct or warrant the Magistrates to use his Power in Spirituell affaires and Religious worship...Conscience ought not to be violated or forced: and indeed it is most true, that a Soule or Spirituall Rape is more abominable in Gods eye, then to force and ravish the Bodies of all the Women in the world.²⁶

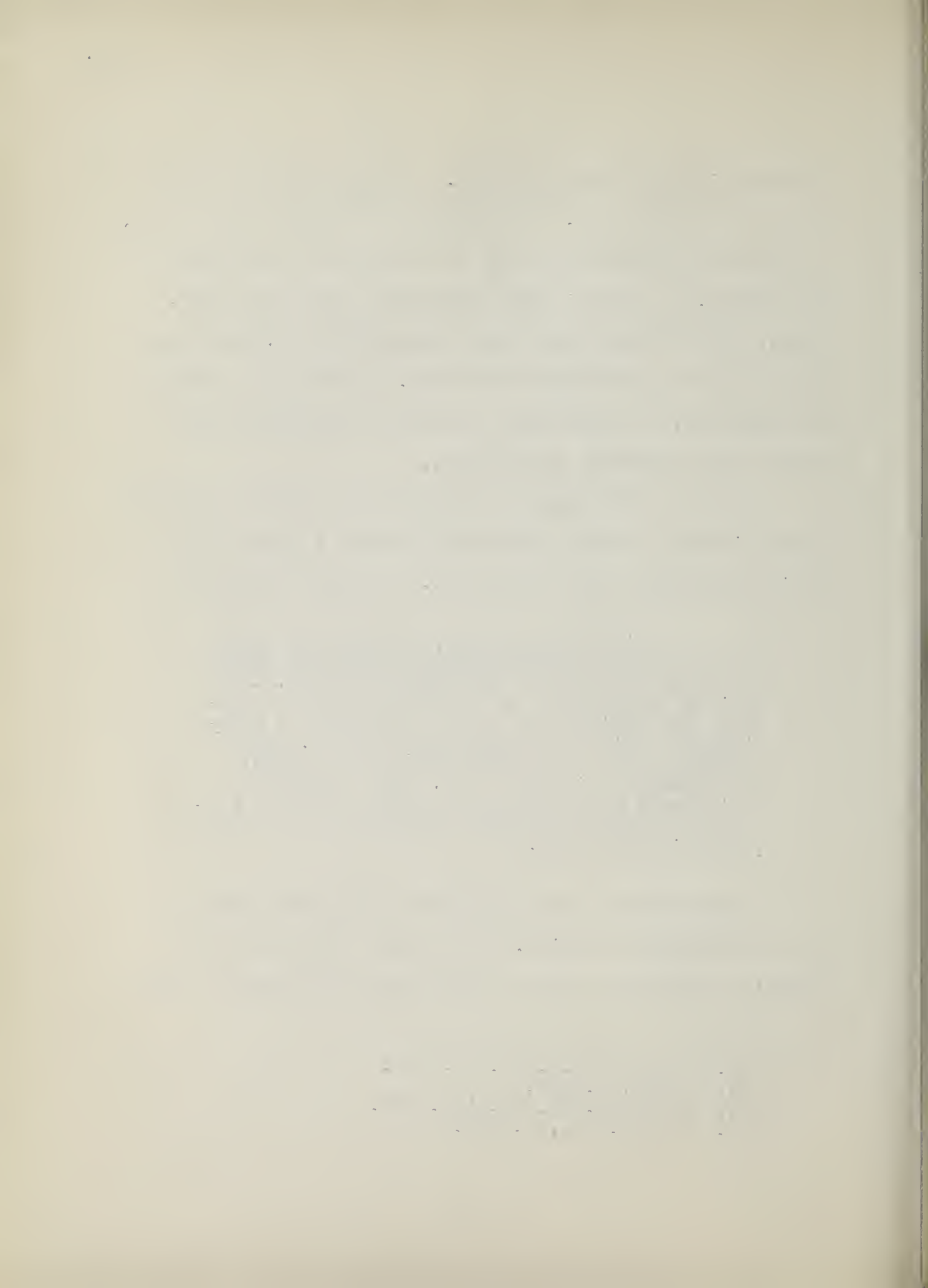
Cotton Mather speaks highly of his grandfather as "a most excellent casuist."²⁷ He meant that he was an expert at handling cases of conscience, although the other

24. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 260.

25. Ibid., I, 119.

26. Williams, BT, 76, 161, 182.

27. Mather, MCA, I, 276.



meaning of the word is applicable too. Cotton reveals all the subterfuge at his command in his exchanges with Williams. He argues that if one in error is shown the truth he is bound to recognize it, and if he persists in his error and is consequently punished "he is not persecuted for cause of conscience, but for sinning against his own conscience."²⁸ By devious means he proves that Williams' banishment was his own fault; he really banished himself.²⁹ He is even dextrous enough to show that Williams was the persecutor.³⁰ And his banishment from Massachusetts was "not counted so much a confinement as an enlargement, where a man doth not so much lose civil comforts as change them."³¹

One of the most telling charges that Williams makes is his complaint against Cotton's fondness for the Old Testament in supporting his case.

Persecutors seldom plead Christ but Moses for their author...Mr. Cotton retreats into the Land of Israel, and calls up Moses and his Laws against Idolatery, Blasphemers, Seducers, etc.³²

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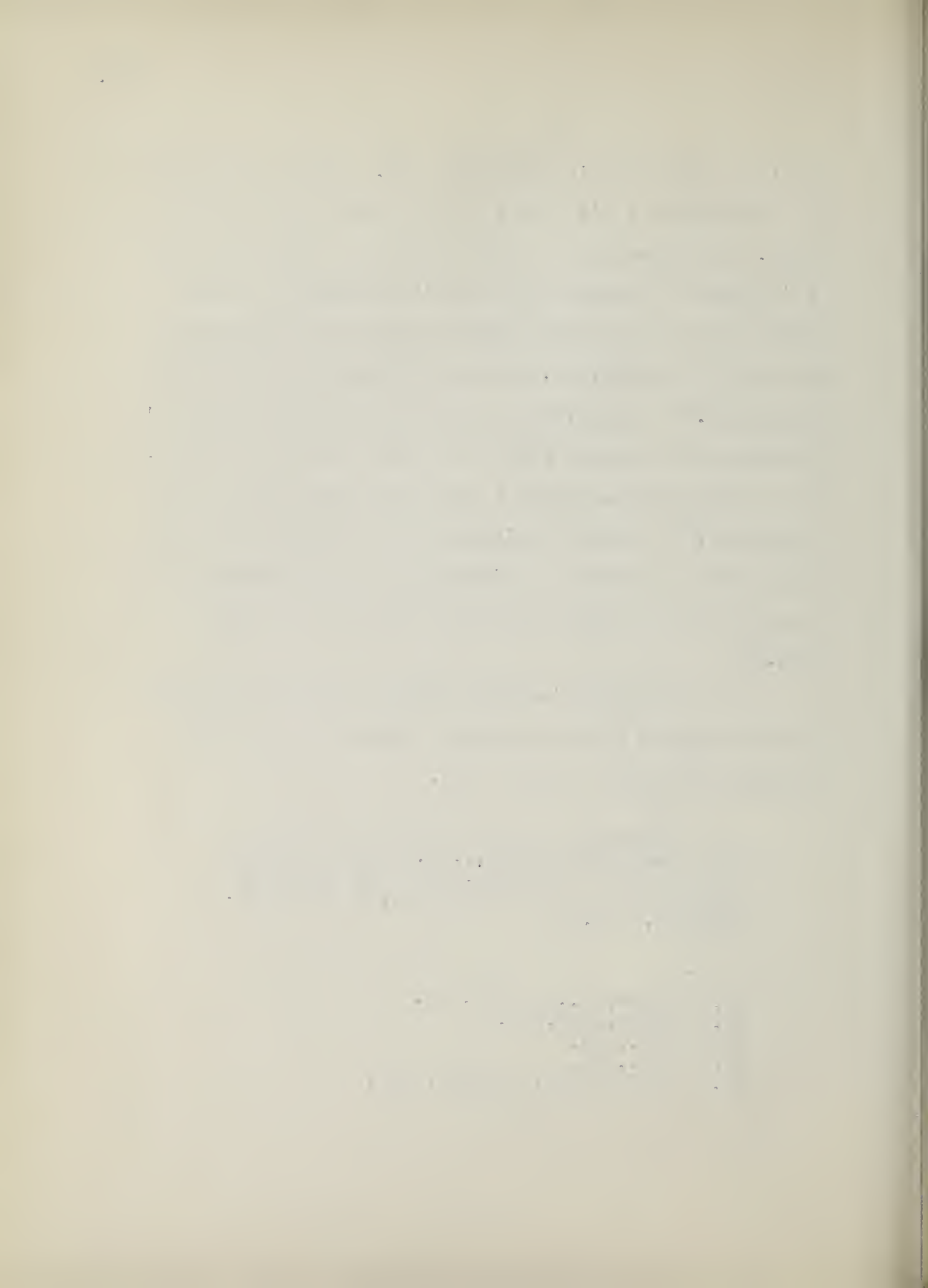
28. Cotton, CL, 8; BTW, 42.

29. Cotton, BTW, 42.

30. Ibid., 26.

31. Ibid., 19.

32. Williams, BT, 58; BTY, 42f.



To discover how influential Cotton was in Williams' banishment is not easy. Outwardly it appears simple; on the surface it looks as though Cotton had nothing to do with it, if his protest in a letter to Williams is to be believed. He writes: "What was done by the Magistrates ...was neither done by my counsell nor consent, although I dare not deny the sentence passed to be righteous in the eyes of God."³³

That Cotton should not question the correctness of the action of the Magistrates could easily stem from his understanding of the fourth charge for which Williams was banished: "That the Civil Magistrates power extends only to the Bodies and Goods, and outward State of men."³⁴ It was basic in the philosophy of John Cotton that the Magistrates should have power in the religious realm. Often he had given them his opinion, solicited and unsolicited. There could be no Theocracy if the civil and ecclesiastical authorities could not work together.

There is no reason to suspect Cotton of prevarication in his statement about the part he played in proceedings against Williams. He acknowledges that he counselled a magistrate at an earlier court.³⁵ But he denies that he

33. Cotton, LW, 13.

34. Williams, CLPE, 5.

35. Cotton, RMW, 42.



had anything to do with the court which sentenced Williams. Winthrop records that at the banishment, all the ministers "save one" approved the sentence.³⁶ That one was probably Cotton. Yet it is odd that he should not publicly approve what later he granted was a righteous act. No doubt, even though he gave them no counsel at the time, Cotton's earlier advice guided some of the magistrates in this hour of decision. At any rate Williams was of the opinion that Cotton was in large part to blame for the treatment accorded him. "If I had perished in that sorrowfull Winters flight; only the blood of Jesus could have washed him from the guilt of mine."³⁷

Even so, we know Williams thought highly of his polemic opponent. He speaks of him variously as "so pretious a man," "the worthily honored and beloved Mr. Cotton," and "Mr. Cotton, whom I have ever desired and still desire highly to esteem and dearly to respect."³⁸ He knew also that "some of no small note had said they could hardly believe that God would suffer Mr. Cotton to err."³⁹ Possibly he felt that if Cotton could not conscientiously vote for his banishment, he should have used his influence

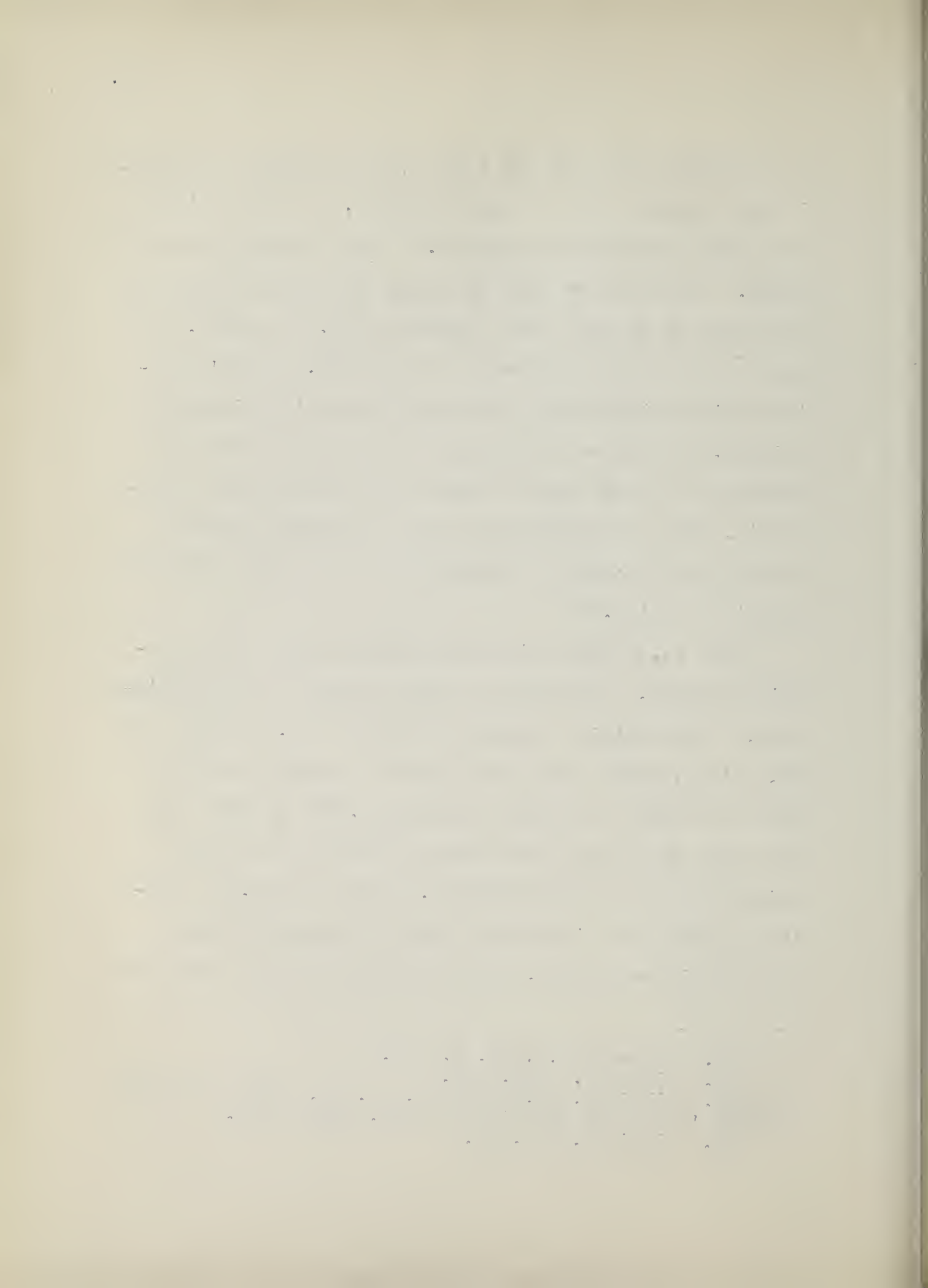
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36. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 163.

37. Williams, CLPE, 315.

38. Williams, BT, 173; BTY, 23, 41. Also see letter to Cotton's son; extract in Williams, CLPE, 327n.

39. Williams, BTY, 42.



in favor of Williams with those who thought he had a direct line to the Almighty. But there were those who believed Cotton was as fallible as any human being.

Thomas Hooker was one of these doubters and some of his parishioners were others. In 1634, the year after Cotton and Hooker arrived in the colony, the General Court met at Newtown and spent a great deal of time deliberating whether the citizens of that town should remove to Connecticut or not. Three reasons were given for the desired action: 1. Boston and Newtown were too close together; 2. The Dutch and English might settle Connecticut; 3. "The strong bent of their spirits to remove hither."⁴⁰ The last reason is suggestive rather than informative; what bent their spirits in that direction we can only conjecture, but it is probable that they followed the inclination of their pastor, Thomas Hooker.

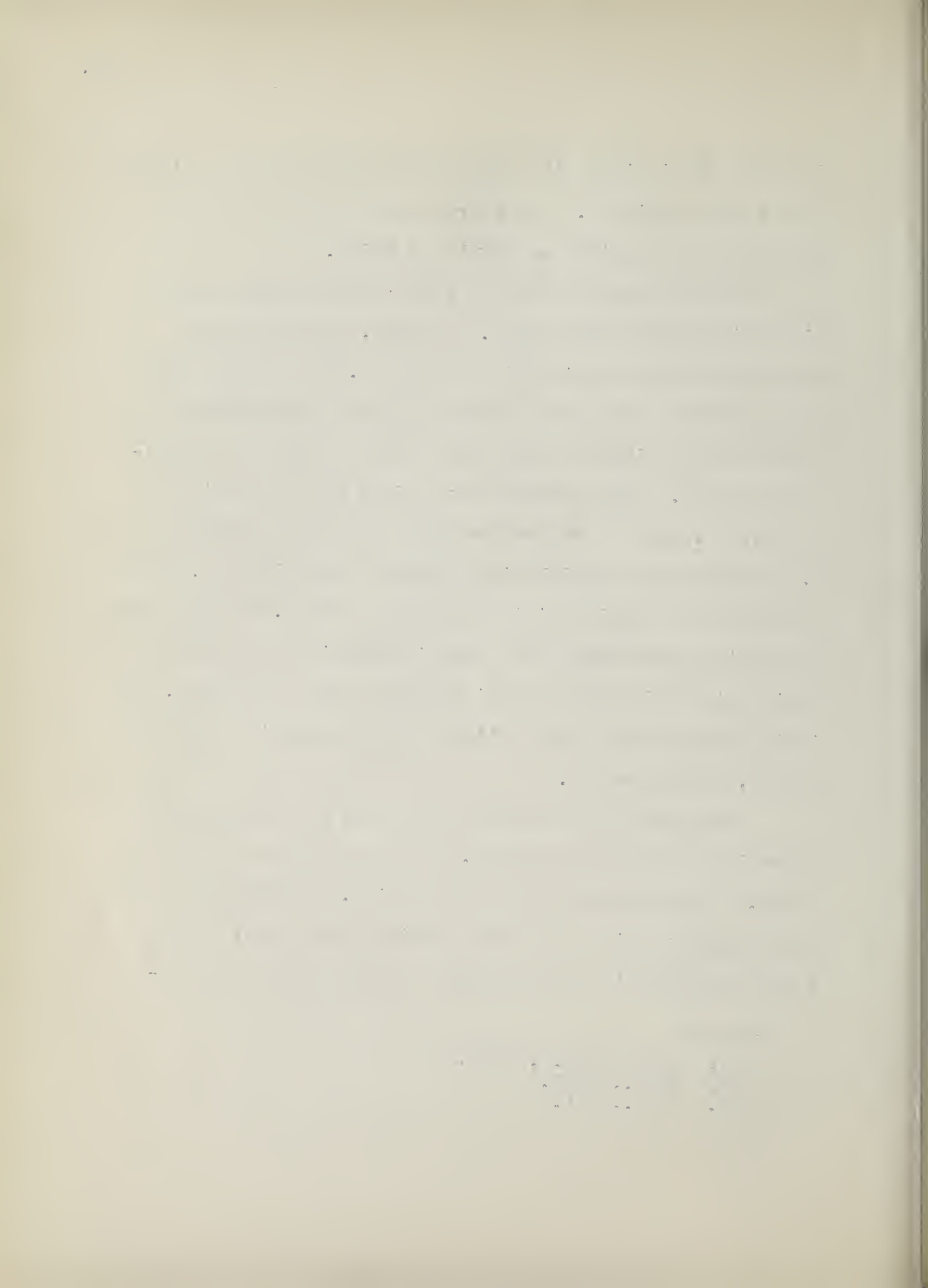
The matter was settled at the time and although the removal was not then effected, it did take place two years later.⁴¹ In 1635 the people at Ipswich, Watertown and Roxbury became restive and asked permission to move.⁴² In 1636 a large part of the church at Dorchester bade good-by

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40. Hosmer (ed.), 132f.

41. Ibid., 173f.

42. Ibid., 131.



to Massachusetts and took up residence in Connecticut.⁴³

This was the same year that the Newtown congregation migrated, so a general fast was proclaimed for the depleted churches in the Bay Colony. We wish Winthrop had been more explicit; he tells us

The church of Boston renewed their covenant this day, and made a large explanation of that which they had first entered into, and acknowledged such failings as had fallen out.⁴⁴

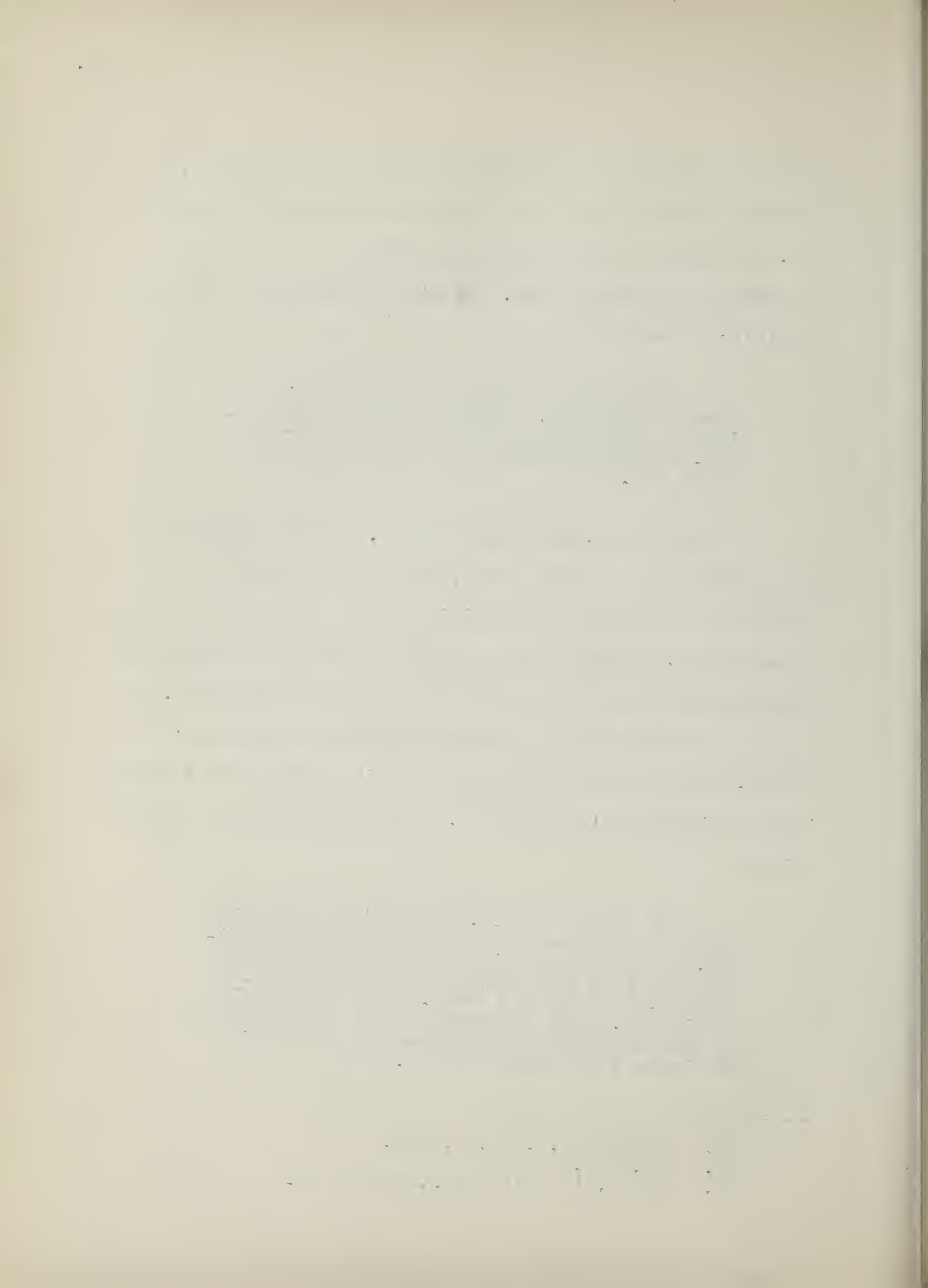
It is a guess, and only a guess, that the "failings" had anything to do with Cotton, though the leader of a church must share his responsibility for failures as well as successes. Whether there was any connection between the Boston teacher and the departure of the other churches, we cannot say; but there was disharmony between Cotton and Hooker, and no doubt the subtle friction between them played its part in Hooker's migration. Professor Williston Walker writes:

It seems clear...that no inconsiderable cause of this desire for removal to Connecticut, so strongly manifested by Hooker and his associates at the General Court in the autumn of 1634, was due to a real, if little openly proclaimed, want of sympathy with the intensity of the theocratic conceptions then governing the leaders of Massachusetts.⁴⁵

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43. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 175.

44. Loc. cit.

45. Walker, in Eliot (ed.), PRLA, 110.



Professor Perry Miller has called into question Hooker's supposed yearning for a more democratic climate than Massachusetts offered, and he has shown that early Connecticut was little, if any, more democratic than Massachusetts.⁴⁶ If this is the case, then the strained relationship between Cotton and Hooker is of more importance than has hitherto been realized.

One of Massachusetts' earliest historians, William Hubbard, indicates there was a rivalry between the two: "Two such eminent stars such as were Mr. Cotton and Mr. Hooker, both of the first magnitude, though of differing influence could not well continue in one and the same orb."⁴⁷ There were contemporary rumors circulating through the colony which John Winthrop tried to spike in a letter to a friend. He admits that Hooker would like to leave the colony for Connecticut, but he is careful to point out that it is

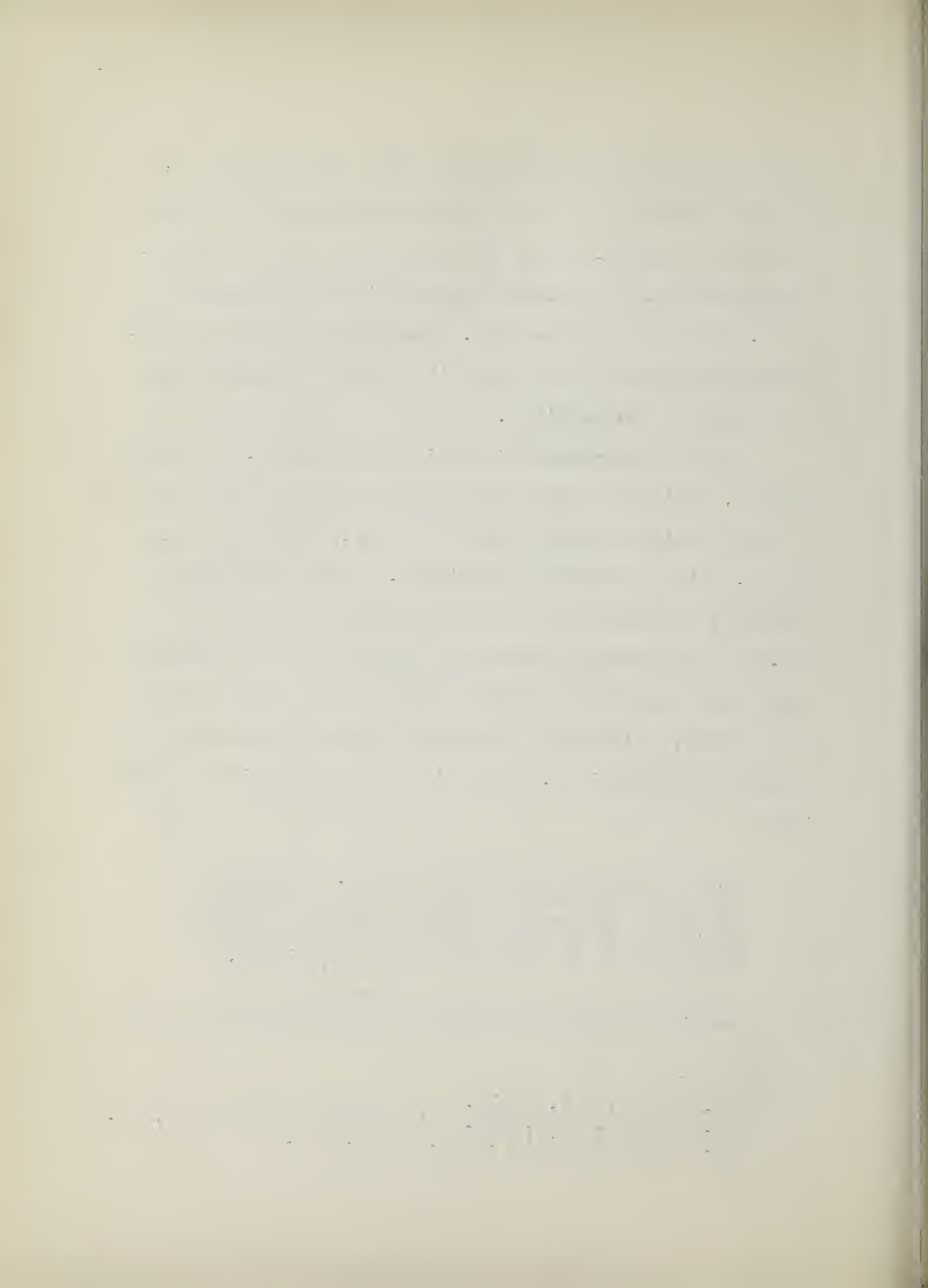
not for any difference between Mr. Cotton and him (soe reporte) for they doe hould a most sweet and brotherly communion together (though their judgments doe somewhat differ about the lawfullnesse of the crosse in the ensigne).⁴⁸

Possibly there were personal reasons as well as con-

46. Miller, Art.(1931).

47. Hubbard, *GHENE*, 173. Also Hutchinson, *HMB*, I, 40.

48. Quoted by Miller, Art.(1931), 676.



flicts of principle. Before Hooker came to America, he asked Cotton to be his assistant, and Cotton refused!⁴⁹ If there was to be an amalgam of effort, perhaps Cotton thought Hooker should do the assisting, and when they arrived in America Hooker found, indeed, that was the role he played. After Hooker died, Cotton had occasion to speak well of him, at the same time hinting that they did not see eye to eye on all issues.

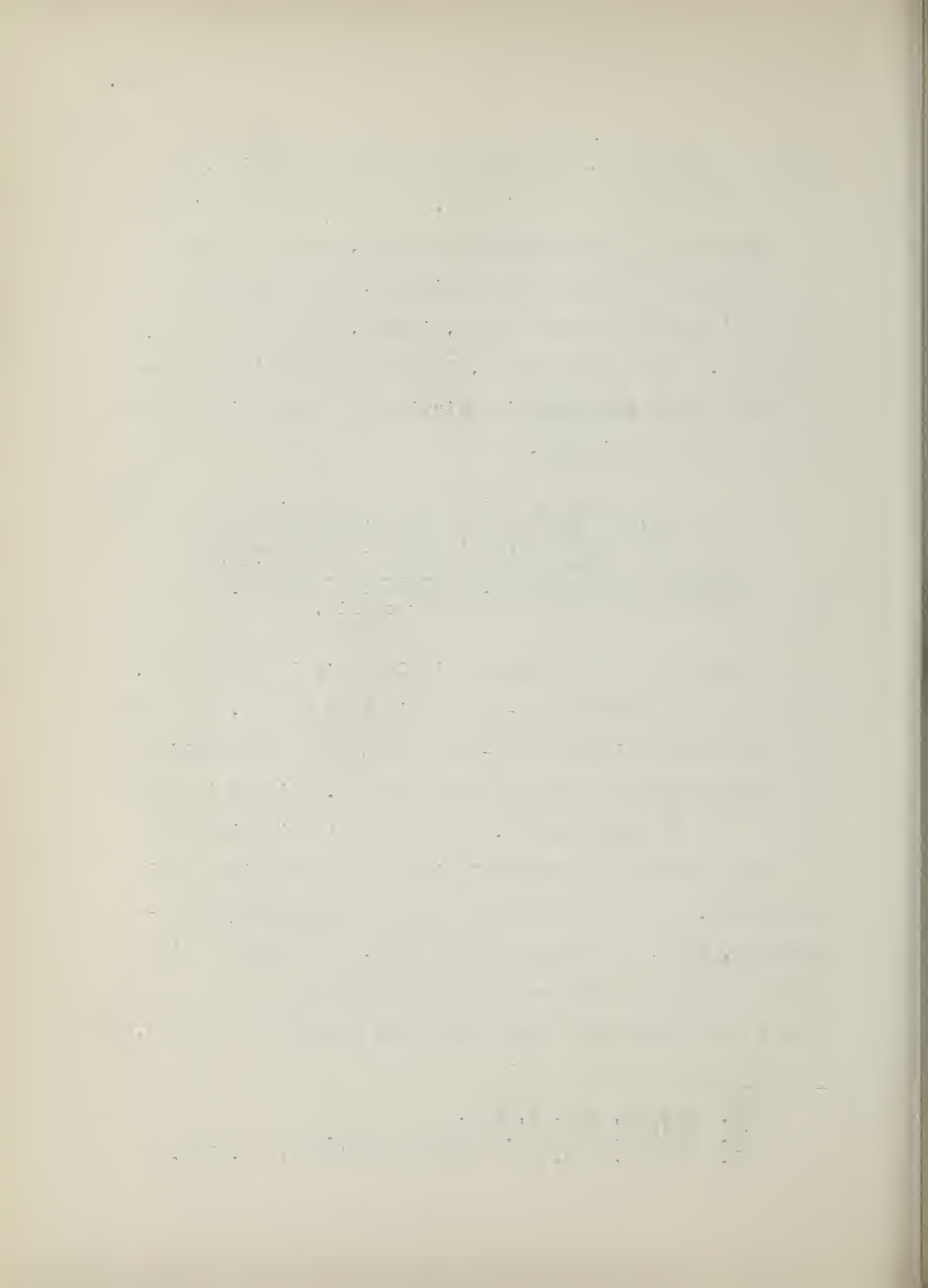
His person and Gifts and Friendship
were pretious and deare to me whilst he lived;
for now that he resteth in Glory, his Name and
memory and labor (saving some very few private
Notions) are honorable, and blessed with me,
and I suppose with all that knew him.⁵⁰

Hooker was not a believer in Cotton's infallibility. Still they were able to co-operate in some things. In 1643 the two were appointed joint-moderators of a Synod held by all the New England churches at Cambridge. Little is known of the work of that meeting, except that it did disapprove of some features of Presbyterianism which had raised their ugly heads. How could anything but the status quo be acceptable, when, as Cotton himself said, the church polity of New England was the nearest thing possible to what would be set up "if the Lord Jesus were here himselfe in person."⁵¹

49. Mather, MCA, I, 437.

50. Cotton, DJC, 51. Italics mine.

51. Cotton, RMW, 237; quoted by Miller, OM, 160.



At the Synod of 1646 John Cotton, Richard Mather, and Ralph Partridge were each appointed to prepare "a model of church government" to be presented at the next session.⁵² The next session the following year was adjourned after a brief meeting because of a threatened epidemic.⁵³ In 1648 when the Synod reconvened, the "models of church government" formulated by Cotton, Mather, and Partridge were considered and the work of Mather, in a greatly abbreviated form, was accepted.⁵⁴

It is rather startling that Mather's platform should have been given preference over that of Cotton. Particularly if Cotton's influence was as strong as has been alleged. Cotton was given the honor of writing the preface to Mather's platform--a kind of consolation prize.⁵⁵

A fact which makes the rejection of Cotton even more apparent is that there was evidently no marked difference between the work of the two men. Professor Walker points out literally dozens of similarities between Mather's platform and Cotton's printed volumes, The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England (1645) and The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven (1644).⁵⁶ Occasionally the likeness

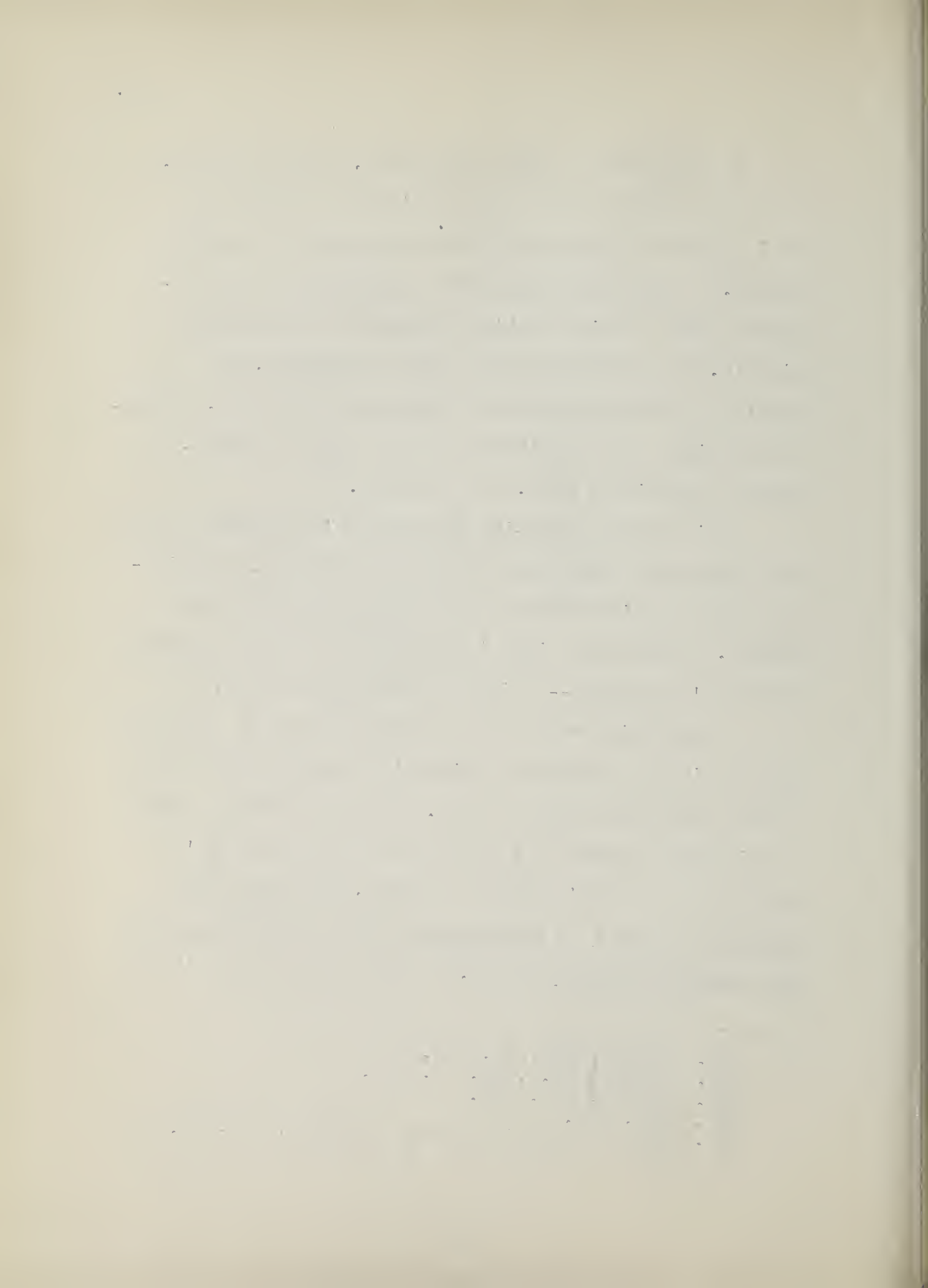
52. Mather, MCA, II, 211.

53. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, II, 324.

54. Walker, CPC, 184.

55. Loc. cit.

56. The Platform is printed in *ibid.*, 203-237.



is so marked that Professor Walker notes Mather must have had Cotton's works before him as he wrote. There is no reason to believe that the platform Cotton offered to the assembly differed in any essential respect from his publications. And Professor Henry Dexter has called The Keyes to the Kingdom of Heaven "the most complete and influential statement of the actual New England Congregationalism."⁵⁷

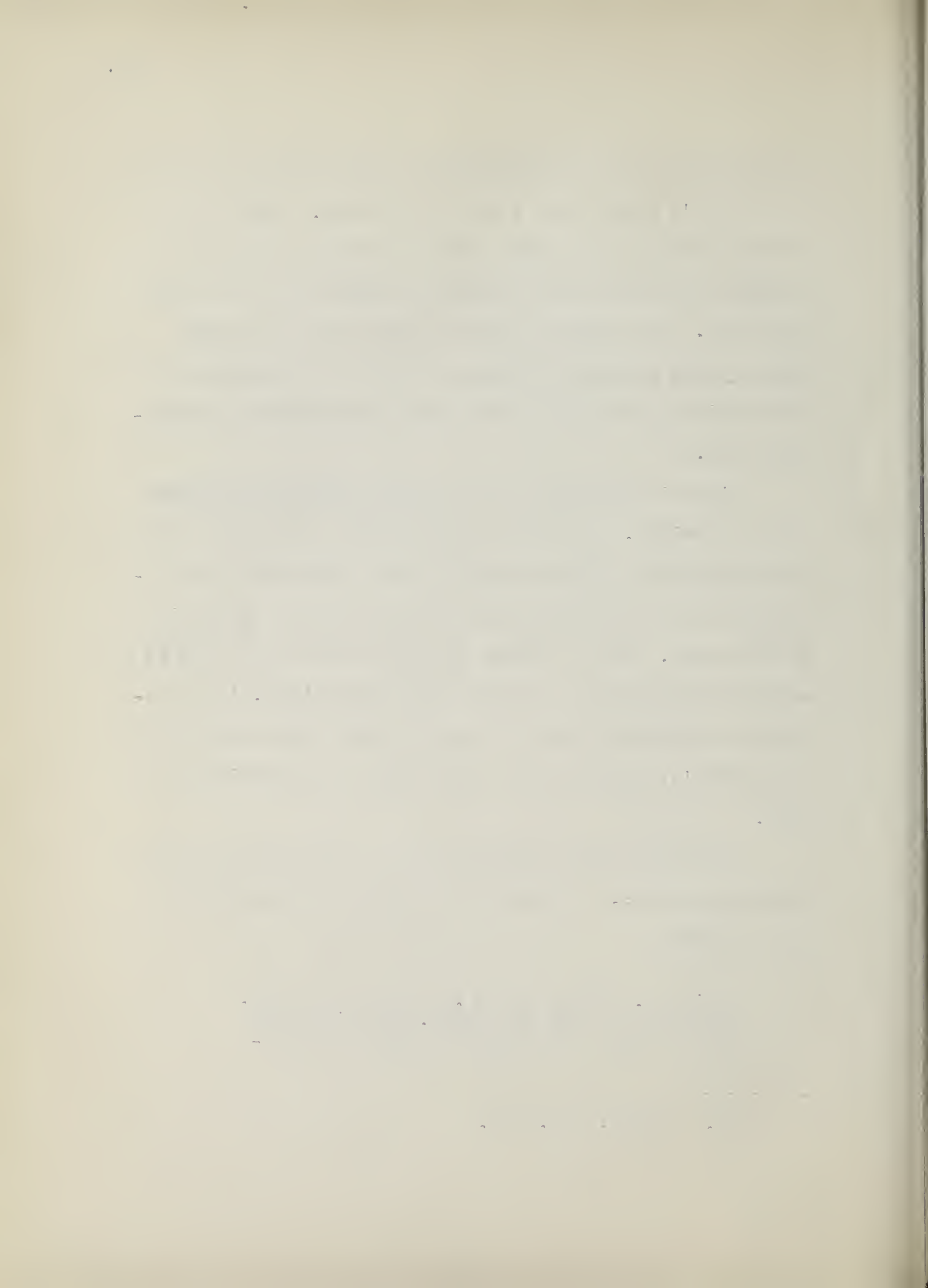
Since in substance the works of Mather and Cotton were so similar, one seems forced to the conclusion that the personality and reputation of the authors was the deciding factor in the acceptance of one and the rejection of the other. Yet if Cotton was all we have been led to believe he was in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, it is incomprehensible that his work should have been turned aside for Mather's. Apparently Cotton was not an "unmitred Pope."

Cotton has been looked upon as a formulator of "the New England Way". So Hubbard writes that church matters were confused

until Mr. Cotton and Mr. Hooker came over, which was in the year 1633, who did clear up the order and method of church govern-

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57. Dexter, CSL, 434.



ment, according as they apprehended the most consonant to the word of God.⁵⁸

Other evidence, however, indicates that Cotton became a leader in the church as he found it; he did not mold it to some pre-conceived notions he had before he came. He was influential within a framework, but he did not create that framework. He is his own best witness on this point; he writes:

It was in the year 1633 when Mr. Hooker, Mr. Stone, with myself arrived in the same Ship together: and being come we found severall Churches gathered, and standing in the same Order, and way, wherein they now walk: at Salem, at Boston, at Water-Towne, at Charle-Towne. (which issued out of Boston) at Dorchester and Rockesbury.⁵⁹

John Winthrop in a letter to Sir Simonds D'Ewes wrote that the church government in New England was

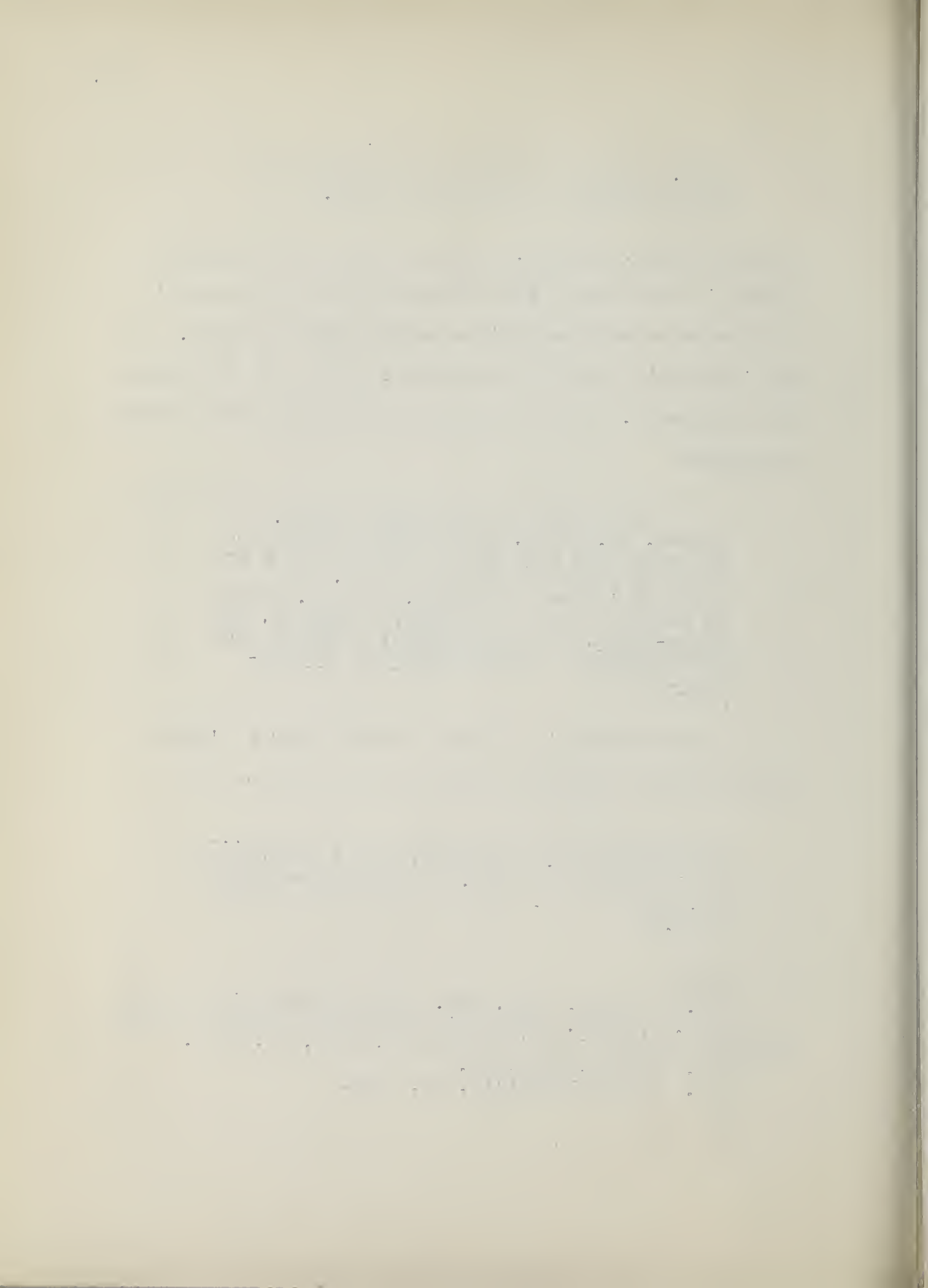
such as the Lords holy and wise servants... doe approve of, & accordingly doe joyne with us in the same Course. I meane especially Mr. Cotton & Mr. Hooker, who lately arrived here.⁶⁰

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58. Hubbard, GHNE, 182. The assertion is repeated by Mather, I, 265f. Cotton is called the "father" of New England Congregationalism by Adams, ACMB, 29, 337n.

59. Cotton, WCCC, 16.

60. Quoted by Miller, OM, 121n.



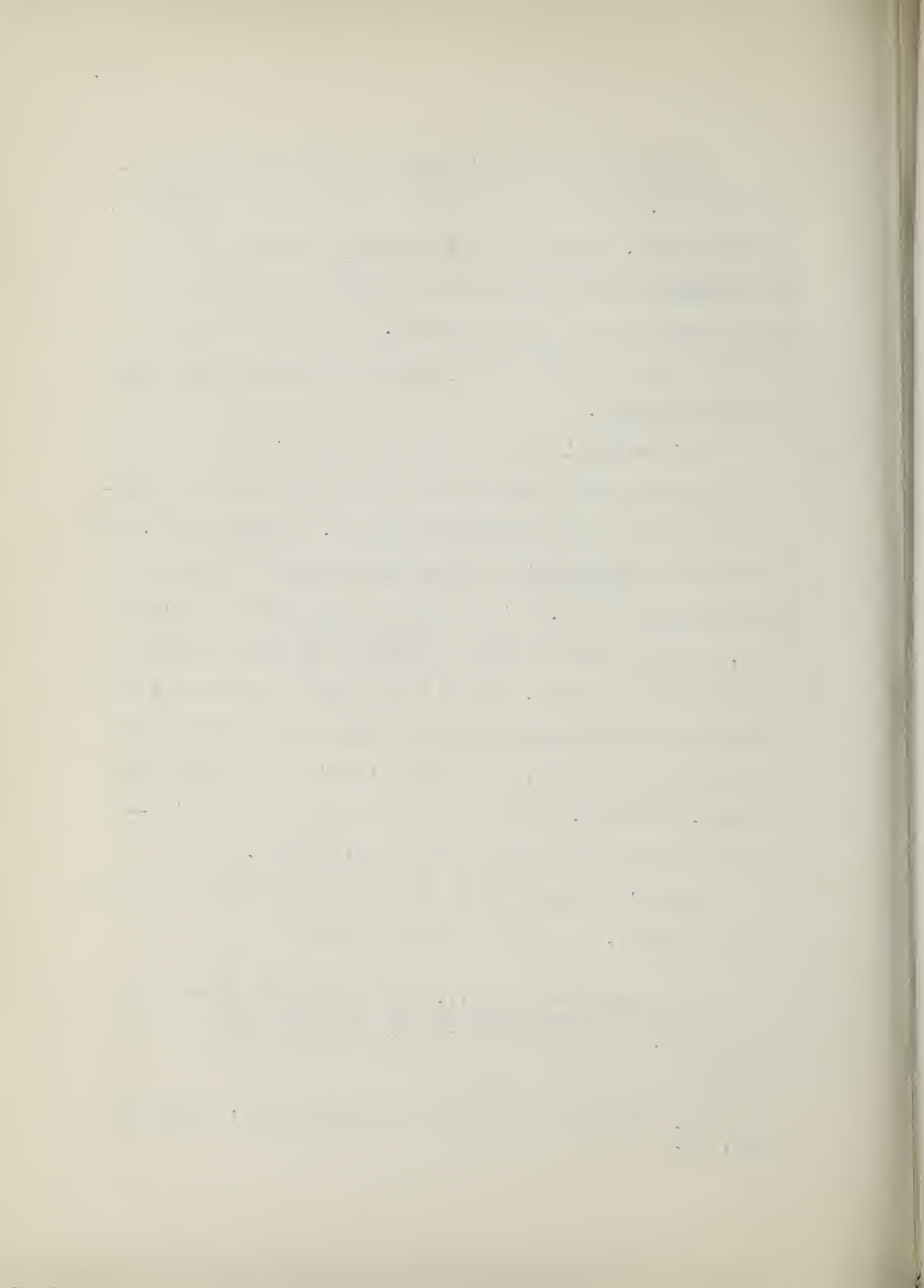
Although he did not inaugurate New England Congregationalism, Cotton early took up his pen in its defense. His two works, The Way of the Churches and The Keyes of the Kingdom, aroused opponents of Congregationalism and they responded with more argument.⁶¹ To all of these Cotton replied in 1648 with The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared.

It is natural that as the foremost literary defender of the faith Cotton should gain through the years a reputation as the prime New England leader. Nevertheless, his works were a description of the New England Way and not a prescription for it. His works were published in England also, and had a much larger circulation there than they enjoyed in the colony. There was no need to convince the inhabitants of Massachusetts that Congregationalism was divine and scriptural; those who weren't convinced were evicted. However, some of the volumes got to America--people like to see photographs of themselves.

Cotton's first defense was written at the request of his colleagues. In 1651 or 1652 he wrote

Many years ago...I was seriously moved
by some of our Brethren and fellow Elders
here, to draw up an Historical Narration of

61. Walker lists some of the opponents' works in TNEL, 93.



our Church-way together with some familiar grounds of the same briefly.⁶²

He was not the only New England Puritan to take up the pen. There were other able defenders. Cotton retorts to the charge that the brethren have been lax in answering criticism leveled against them:

Mr. Hooker hath written a large answer to Mr. Rutherford, Mr. Davenport to Mr. Paget, Mr. Mader [Richard Mather] to Mr. Rathbone, Mr. Shepard and Mr. Allen to Mr. Ball, Mr. Norton in Latine to Mr. Appollonii...it cannot be said 'that none of us have been willing to reply to the Books written against us.'⁶³

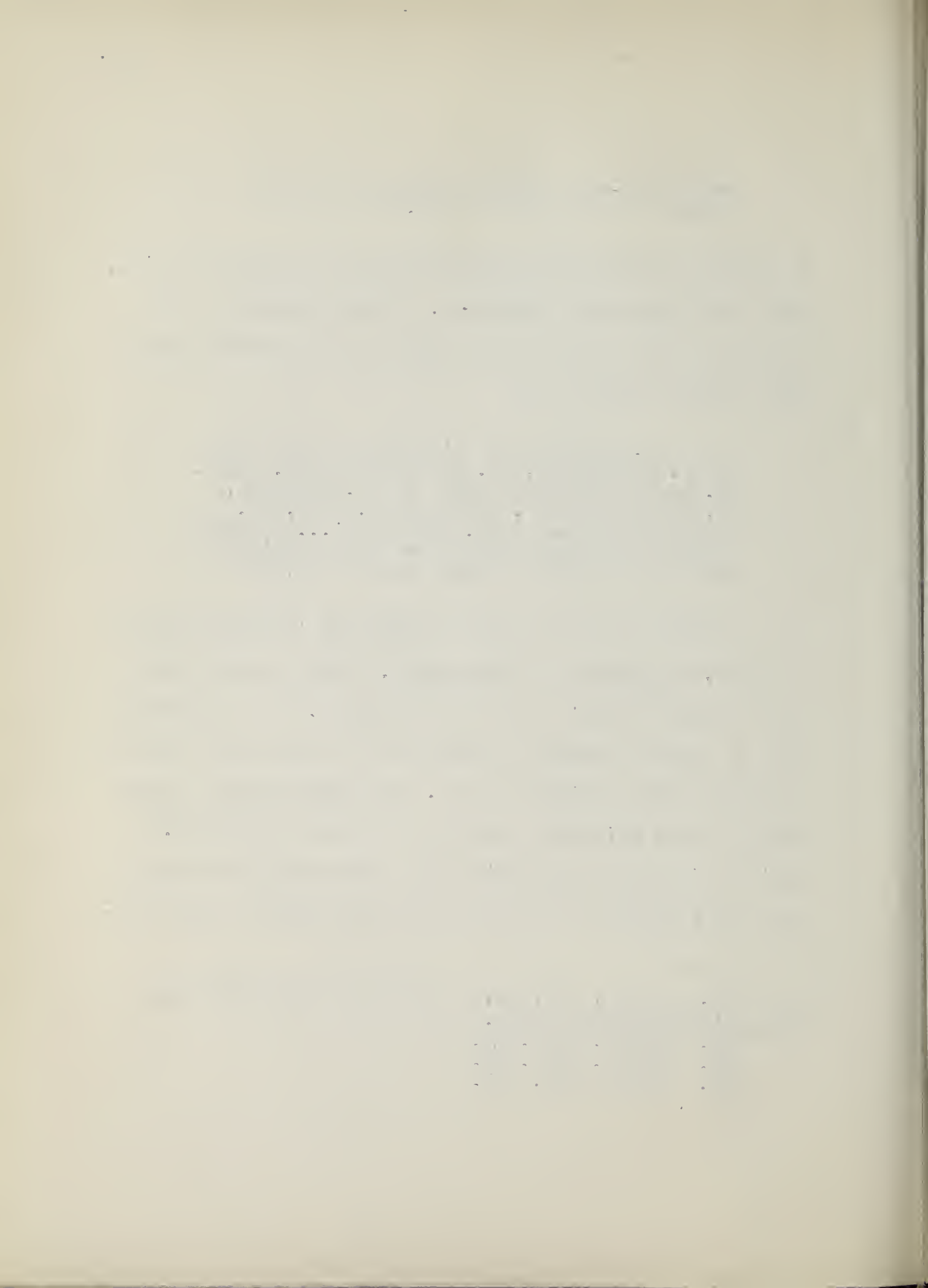
In 1644 Professor Samuel Rutherford in England wrote a volume, Due Right of Presbyteries, which attacked among other things Cotton's Way of the Churches.⁶⁴ So the ministers of the New England churches met to decide who would do battle for them against the foe. They decided that Thomas Hooker should write the reply to Professor Rutherford.⁶⁵ Again it is rather surprising that Cotton was not chosen; not only by reason of the fact that his book had been chal-

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62. Cotton, DJC, 36. The work was probably The Way of the Churches (1643).

63. Cotton, WCCC, 68.

64. Walker, TNEL, 91.

65. Walker, CPC, 141.



lenged, but also because of his supposed influence.

The volume that Hooker wrote, The Survey of Church Discipline, is regarded as one of the monuments of early New England Congregationalism. In Professor Walker's opinion it shares with Cotton's Way of the Churches and Mather's Cambridge Platform, "the honor of being the most conspicuous explanation of early Congregationalism."⁶⁶

If Cotton Mather is to be believed, John Cotton's influence grew rather than diminished after his death. He writes that next to the Bible, "which was the professed, perpetual and only directory of these churches," came Cotton's Keyes of the Kingdom in the estimation of New England Puritans.⁶⁷ Probably a greater effect on the church life of the Massachusetts colony came as a result of his writings being largely incorporated into the Cambridge Platform.

In striking instance Cotton was voted down in church matters, that is, the matter of providing for the maintenance of the ministers of the colony. In 1630, three years before Cotton came to the colony, the General Court voted the assessment of a special tax in order to raise funds to pay the clergy. This was apparently carried out to the

66. Walker; TNEL, 91.

67. Mather, MCA, 280.

1880

Jan 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$100.00

Feb 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$200.00

Mar 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$300.00

Apr 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$400.00

May 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$500.00

Jun 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$600.00

Jul 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$700.00

Aug 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$800.00

Sep 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$900.00

Oct 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$1000.00

Nov 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$1100.00

Dec 1st. Received of the
Treasurer of the
Board of Education
the sum of \$100.00
for the year 1880.
Total \$1200.00

satisfaction of all concerned, at least to the satisfaction of the clergy.

John Cotton arrived in the colony in the summer of 1633. By winter he was disgruntled with the method employed by his church in raising the ministers' salary. Presumably he and Mr. Wilson were paid out of a fund raised by taxation. So one Lord's Day he grappled with the problem from the pulpit. And we read in Winthrop's Journal:

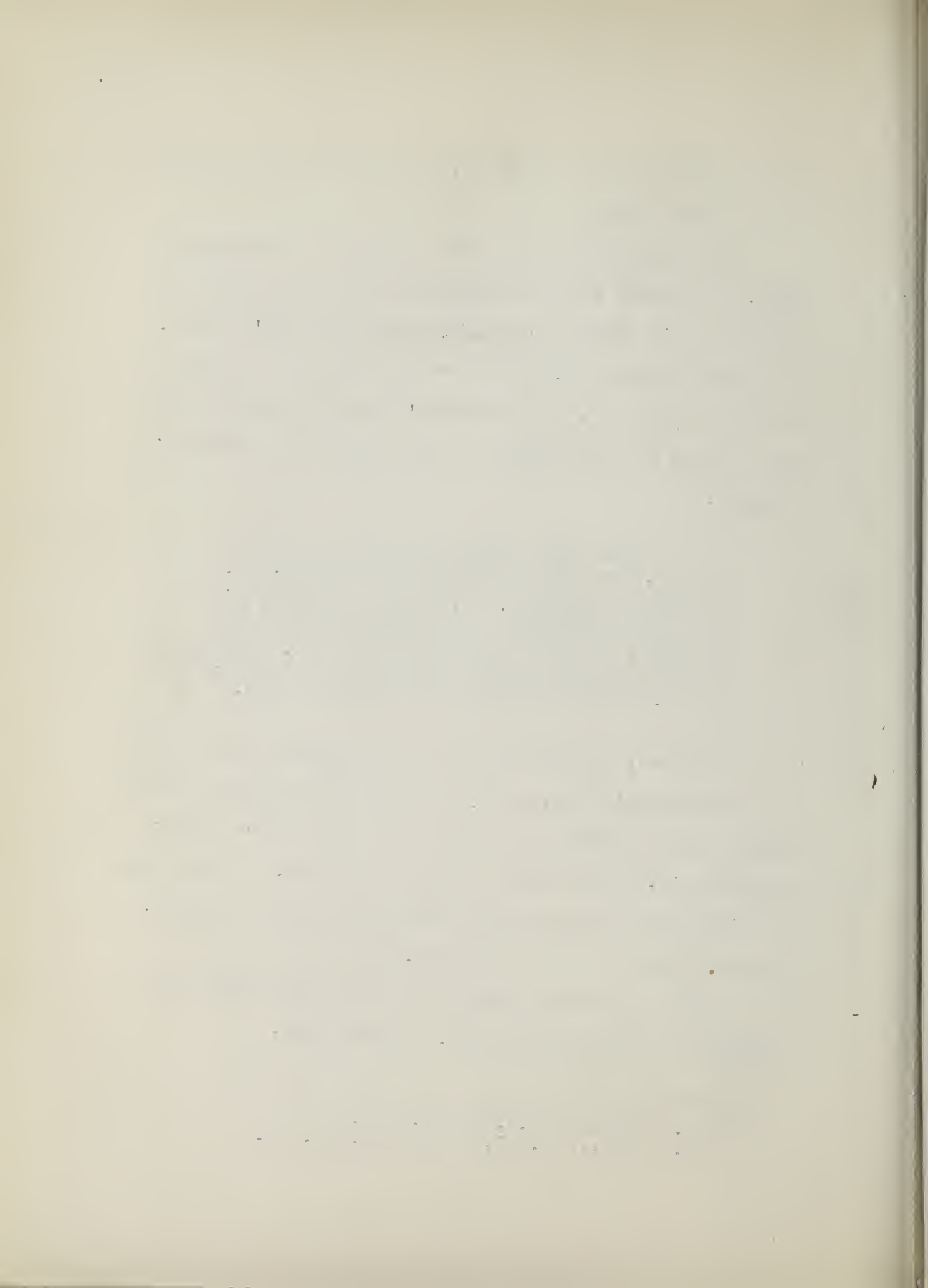
After much deliberation and serious advice, the Lord directed the teacher, Mr. Cotton, to make it clear by the scripture, that the ministers' maintenance as well as the other charges of the church, should be defrayed out of a stock, or treasury, which was to be raised out of the weekly contribution, which accordingly was agreed upon.⁶⁸

However, it was only the Boston church which solved the problem this way. Although Cotton undoubtedly would have liked to have had all the churches of the colony follow suit, each church did as it pleased. We have the testimony of Winthrop and Lechford that as often as not taxation was the means employed.⁶⁹

Six years later Cotton took up the cry again (if indeed he ever laid it down). And we read:

68. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 116.

69. Ibid., II, 91. Lechford, PD, 50.



Mr. Cotton, preaching out of the 8 of Kings, 8, taught, that when magistrates are forced to provide for the maintenance of ministers, etc., then the churches are in a declining condition. Then he showed, that the ministers' maintenance should be by voluntary contributions, not by lands, or revenues, or tithes, etc; for those have always been accompanied with pride, contention, and sloth, etc.⁷⁰

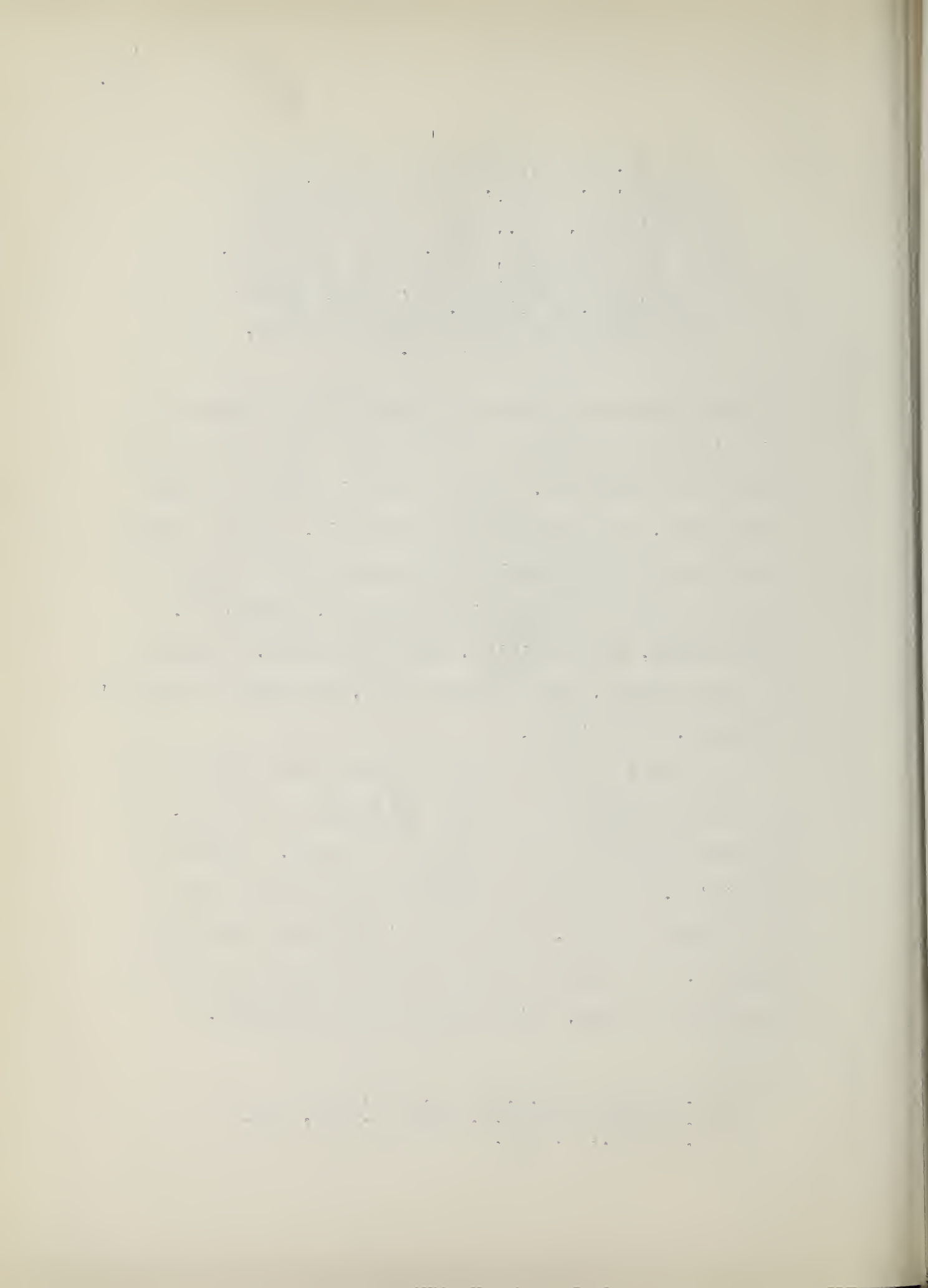
Probably the reason Cotton preached on the subject at this time was that he heard a movement was afoot to grant land to the ministers, and this was his effort to block such a move. But his effort was in vain. At the General Court the following month two thousand acres of land was granted to four ministers in the colony. Hugh Peter, Thomas Welde, Peter Bulkley, and John Wilson.⁷¹ Half of the land granted, one thousand acres, was given to Cotton's colleague, John Wilson.

No doubt Cotton would have been given some land too had he not opposed that method of paying the clergy. He was probably offered land which he refused. Despite his opposition, the cause of voluntary support for ministers was a losing battle, and Cotton himself two years later relented. In 1641 the General Court granted him six hundred acres of land, which apparently he accepted.⁷²

70. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 116.

71. Shurtleff (ed.), RCMB, I, 262, 263.

72. Ibid.. I. 344.



If popularity is any judge of influence, then Cotton's most influential work by far was his catechism for children, Spiritual Milk for Babes drawn out of the Breasts of Both Testaments (1646). Possibly the work was the result of a request by the General Court, which on June 2, 1641 voted "It is desired that the elders would make a catechisme for the instruction of youth in the grounds of religion."⁷³ Here is an extract to give some idea of how the milk tasted, though it has perhaps soured since the Testaments were milked long ago.

Quest. What hath God done for you?

Answ. God hath made me, (a) He keepeth me,
and he can save me.

Quest. Who is God?

Answ. God is a spirit of (b) himself, and
for himself.

Quest. How many Gods be there?

Answ. There is but one God in three Persons,
(c) the Father, the Son, and the Holy
Ghost.

Quest. How did God make you?

Answ. In my first parents (d) holy and
righteous.

Quest. Are you then born holy and righteous?

Answ. No, my first Father (e) Sinned, and
I in him.

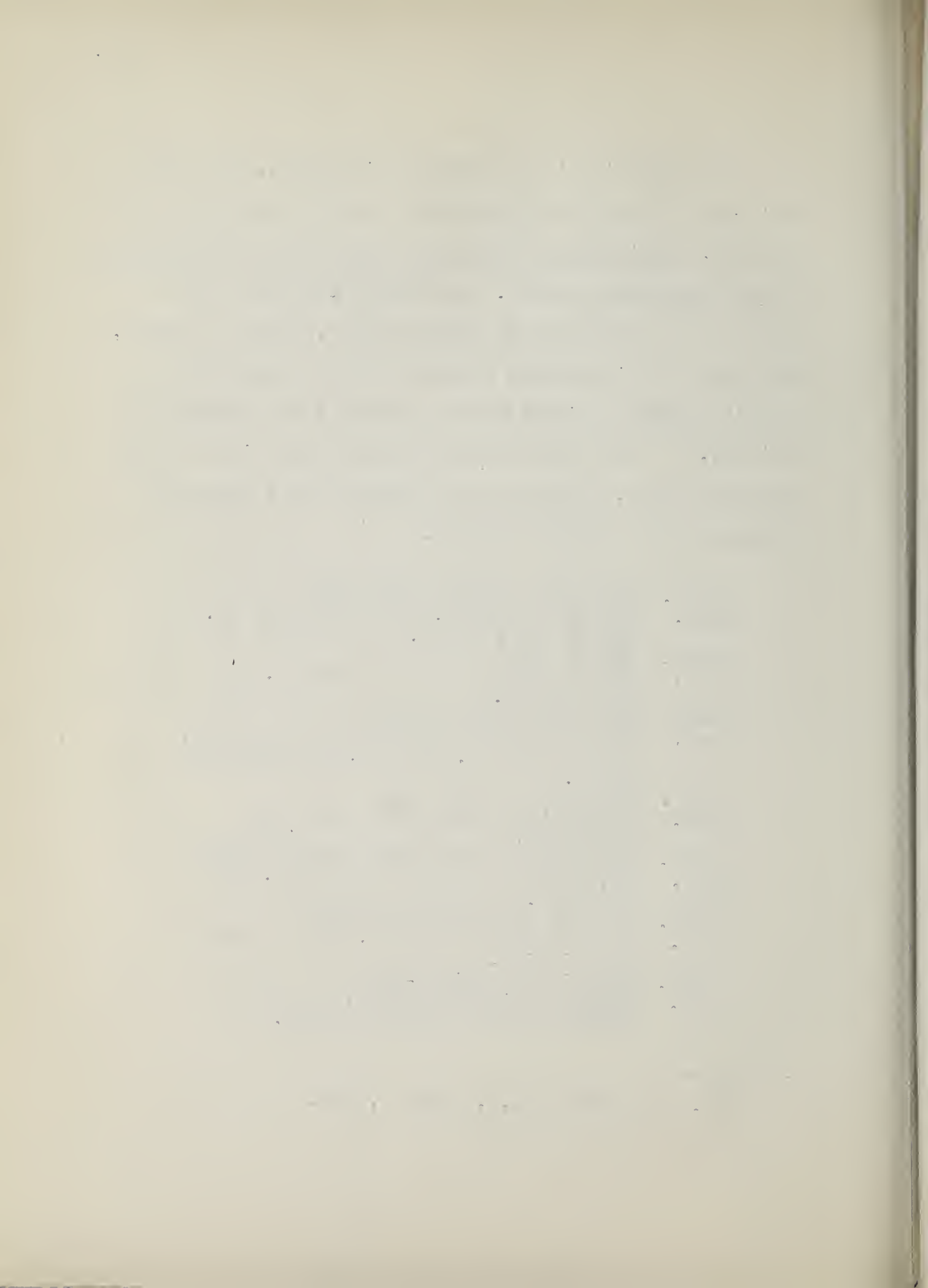
Quest. Are you then born a sinner?

Answ. I was conceived in sin, and (f) born
in iniquity.

Quest. What is your Birth-sin?

Answ. Adams sin imputed to me, (g) and a
corrupt nature dwelling in me.

73. Shurtleff (ed.), RCMB, I, 328.



Quest. What is your corrupt nature?

Answ. My corrupt nature is empty of (h)
Grace, bent unto sin, and only unto
sin, and that continually.

Quest. What is sin?

Answ. Sin is the (i) transgression of the Law.⁷⁴

Then follow the ten commandments, a reminder that the wages of sin is death from which only Christ can save; after this are definitions of faith, prayer, repentance, the Church, and sacraments. Running throughout the work are marginal scriptural references, clustered parallel with the text like a cloud of witnesses. There were seventeen such proof texts for the catechism quoted.

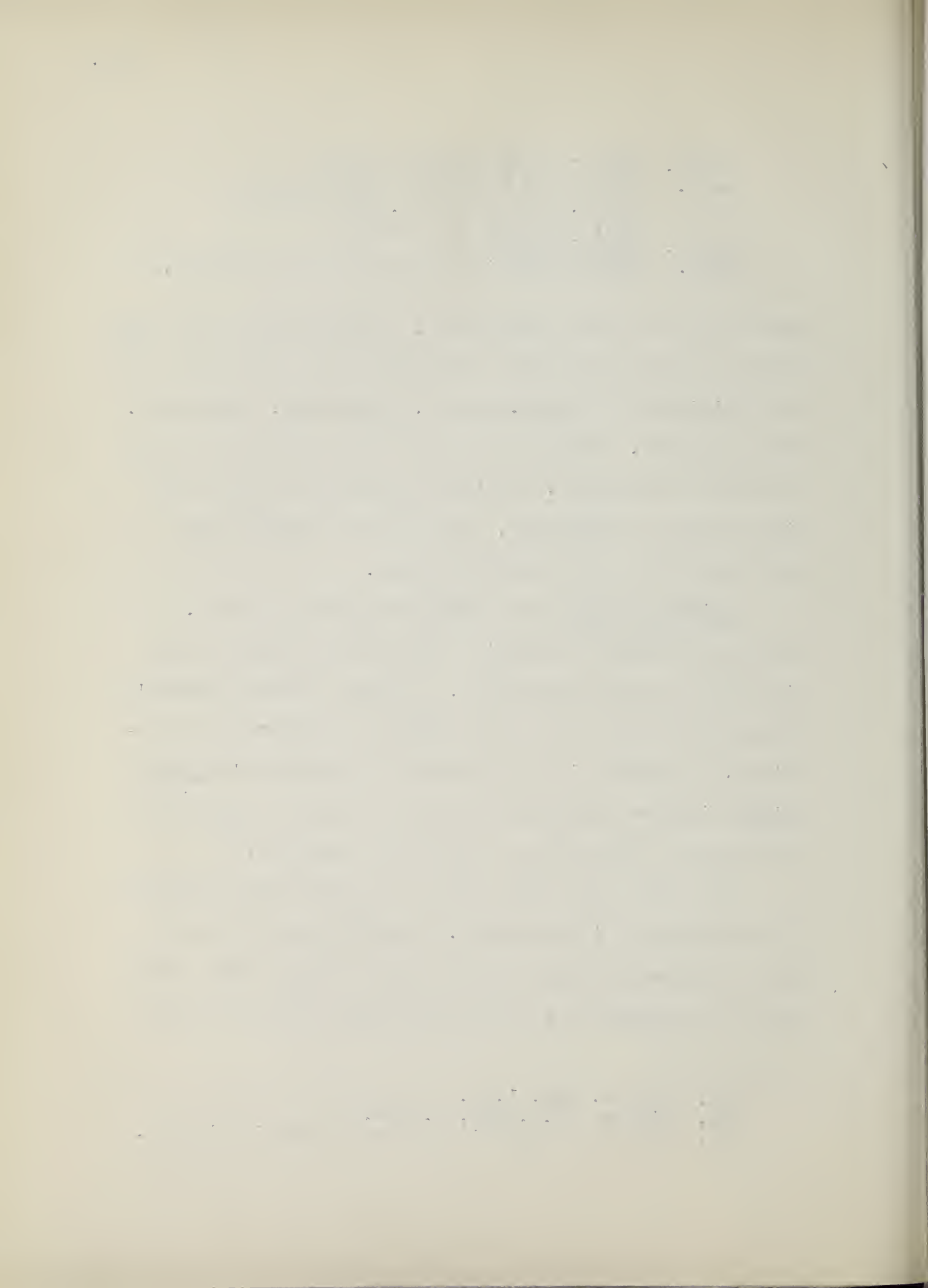
Spiritual Milk had a long and notable history. It was in continuous circulation for over one hundred and fifty years after Cotton died. In 1691 Grindall Rawson's translation of the work into Indian was published in Cambridge.⁷⁵ In 1720 it was printed in John Eliot's Indian Primer with the language of the Massachusetts Indians on one page and with English on the page opposite.⁷⁶

The number of little Puritans weaned from wickedness by this means is incalculable. Writing near the end of the seventeenth century Cotton Mather relates "the children of New England are to this day most usually fed with

74. Cotton, SMB, 1, 2.

75. Winsor (ed.), MHB, I, 475.

76. There is a copy in the Boston Public Library.



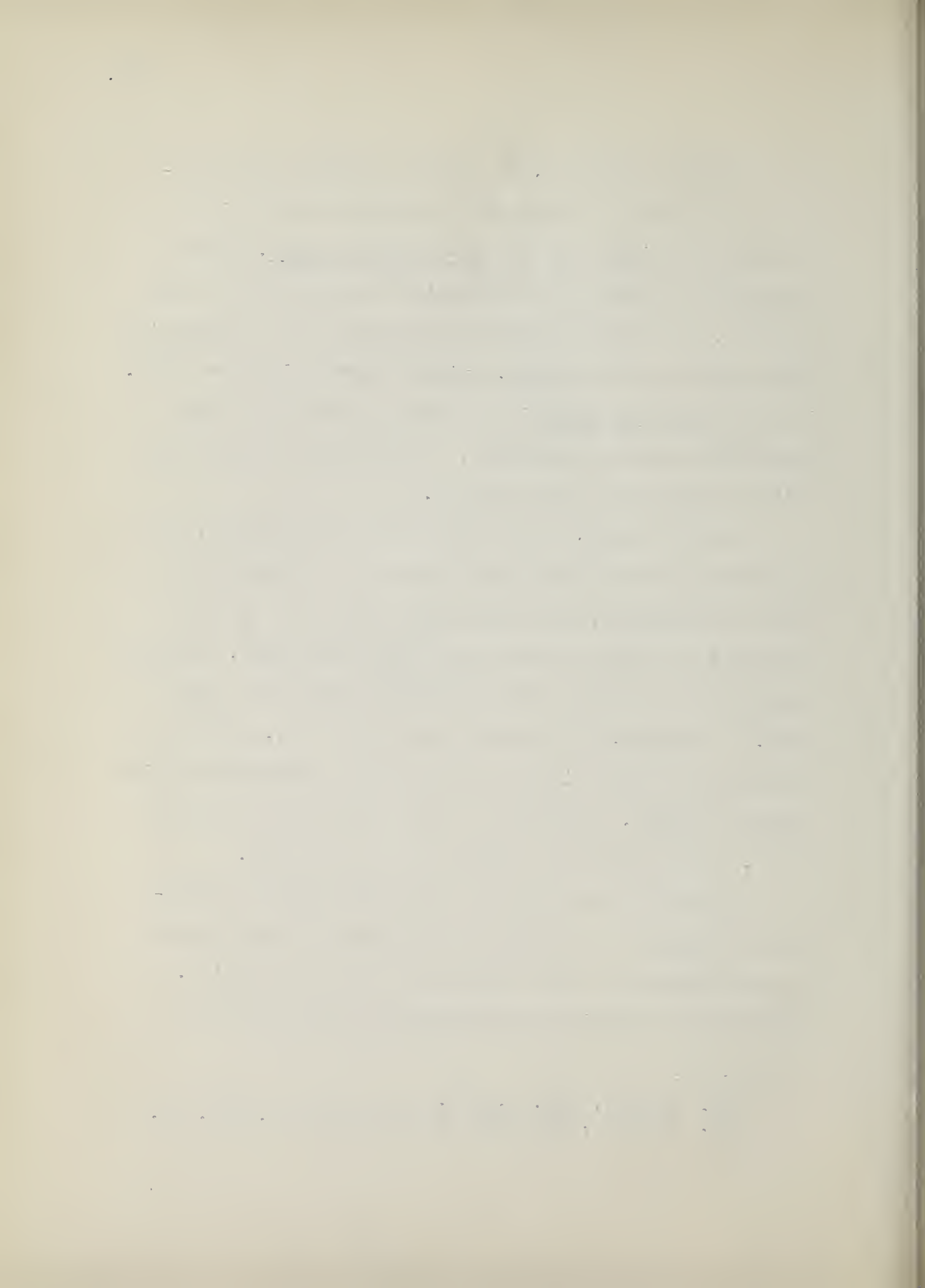
his excellent catechism."⁷⁷ About a hundred years following the death of Cotton the catechism entered into a fortunate marriage with the New England Primer, which prolonged the life of the catechism for more than a score of years. The Boston Public Library has in its possession seven copies of the Primer, printed between 1760 and 1790, in which Milk for Babes is included together with the Westminster Shorter Catechism. There were probably other editions which have not survived.

The Westminster Catechism finally won the day, but not before the work by Cotton had served a century and a half of usefulness. MacClure makes mention of another catechism by Cotton entitled Meat for Strong Men, designed obviously for maturer minds demanding more than a milk diet.⁷⁸ However, no copy has come down to us, and the indication is that it never achieved the popularity of its younger brother. MacClure is the only author who refers to it, and he gives no source for the statement.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century agitation was abroad to change the government of the churches in Massachusetts in the direction of Presbyterianism, allowing the creation of ministerial associations em-

77. Mather, MCA, I, 280.

78. MacClure, LJC, 263; quoted by Ellis, HFC, 37.



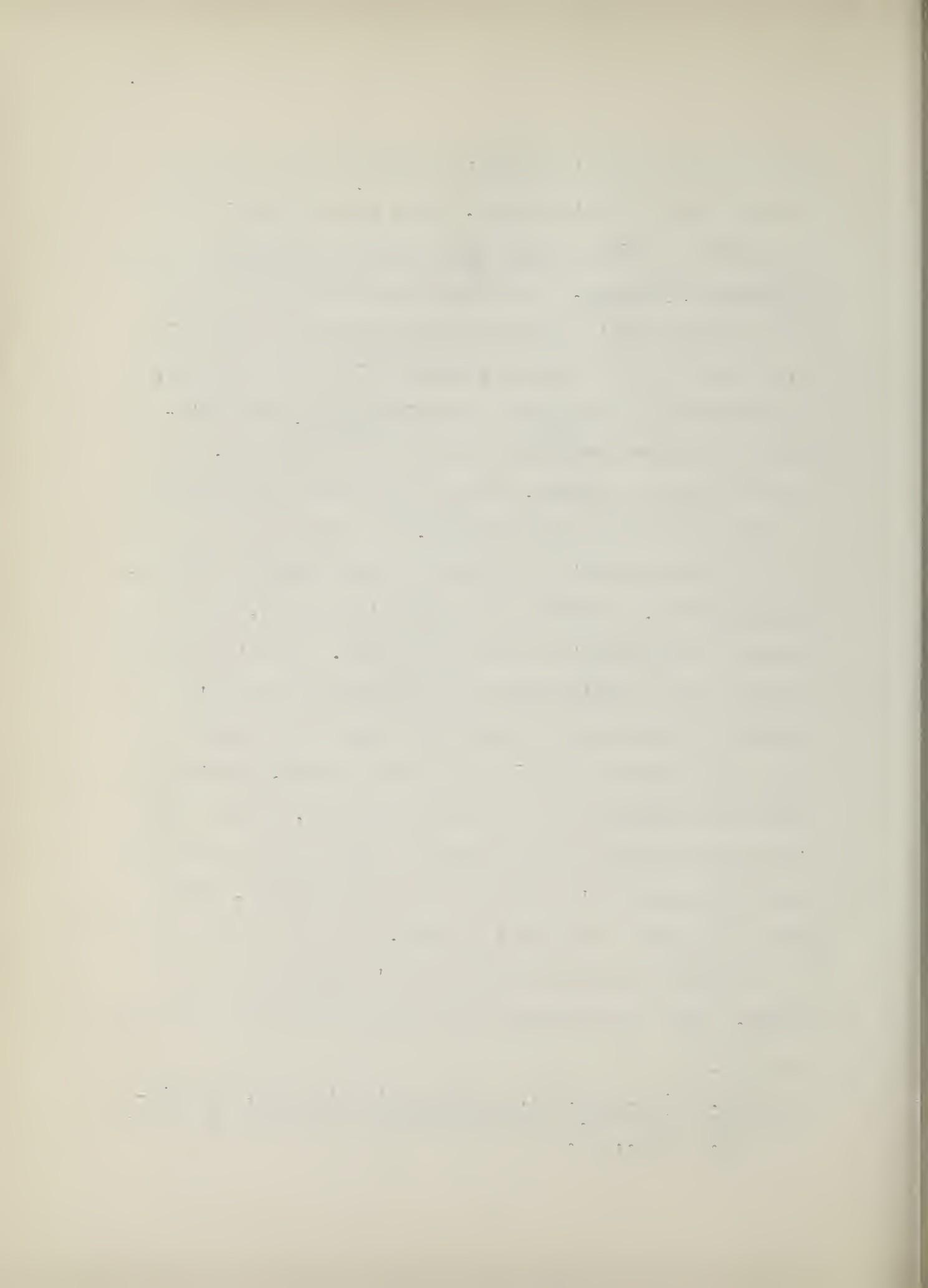
powered to license ministerial candidates and to propose candidates for vacant charges. John Wise of Ipswich took up his pen to write A Vindication of the Government of the New England Churches. He quoted from Scripture to prove that Congregational polity was as God intended it should be. Because one of the men requested it before he died, Wise appended to the back of his Vindication the testimony "of the two most aged ministers of the gospel, yet surviving in the country," though both were "in glory" by the time the volume was published.⁷⁹

It was the belief of those two aged apostles of Congregationalism, a belief not unusual in old men, that the churches should remain as once they were. To bolster their argument they quoted a few pages from Cotton Mather's account of John Cotton to the effect that the churches "have such liberty that without their consent, nothing of common concernment may be imposed upon them."⁸⁰ But John Wise found no need to quote Cotton; three score years after the Boston preacher's death he was a memory only, not one whose name could strengthen a cause.

One last observation on Cotton's influence in the church. When one considers the esteem in which he was held

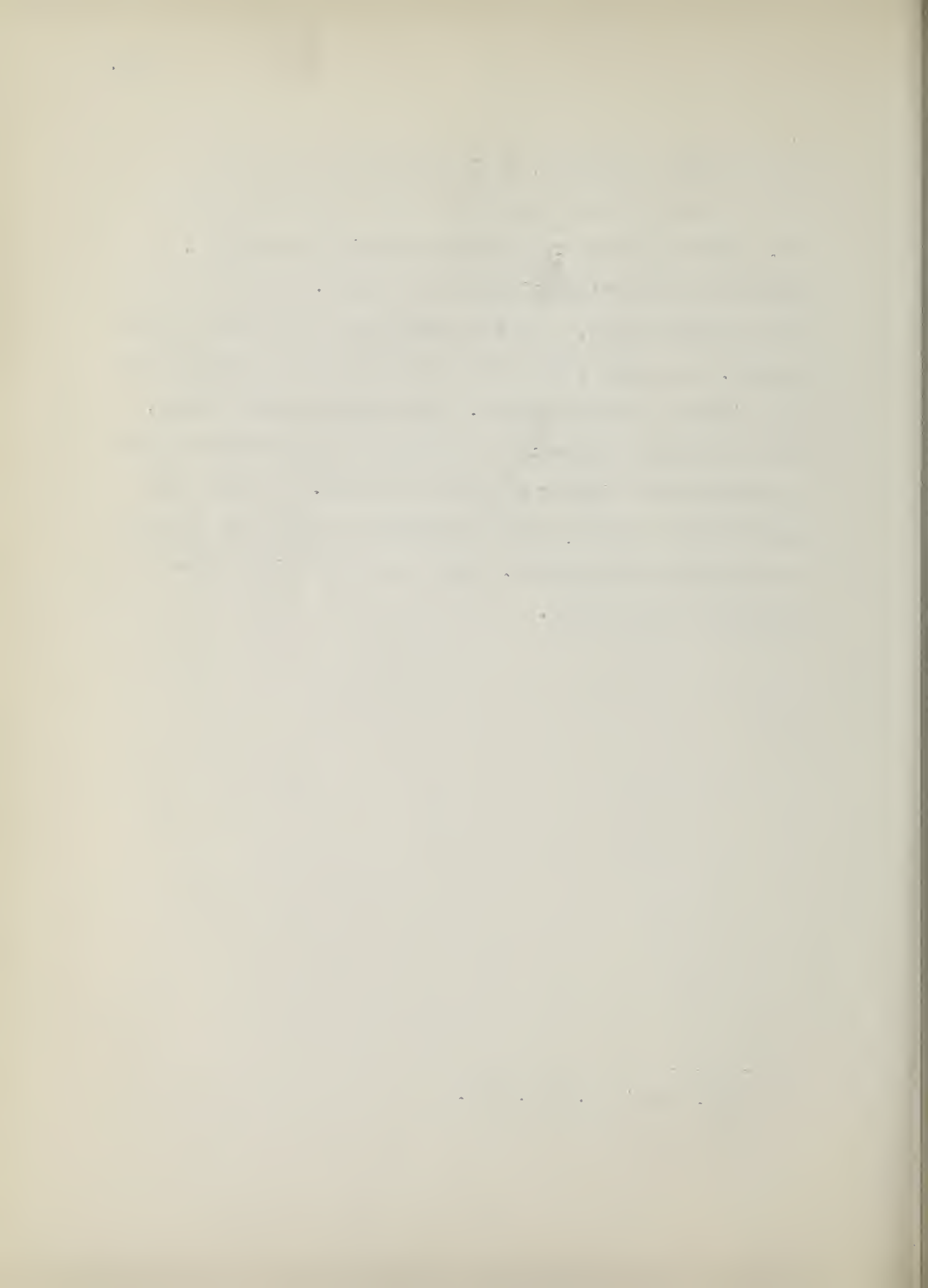
 79. Wise, VGC, 72. Hubbard died in 1704, and Higginson died in 1708. The Vindication was printed in 1717.

80. Ibid., 80.



by his fellow clergymen, it is odd that none of the synods of the New England church were ever held at Boston. Boston was the seat of the colonial government, Boston was the meeting place of the court, Boston was the home of John Cotton. Yet the Synods met in Newtowne (Cambridge). No doubt part of the reason for the selection of that site was Thomas Shepard, the eloquent pastor there, whose preaching a Harvard student said made the four years of college seem like four years of heaven.⁸¹ Still one would think a greater reason necessary to draw (or drive) the clergymen from Boston. That reason we find in the Antinomian controversy.

81. Morison, BBC, 133.



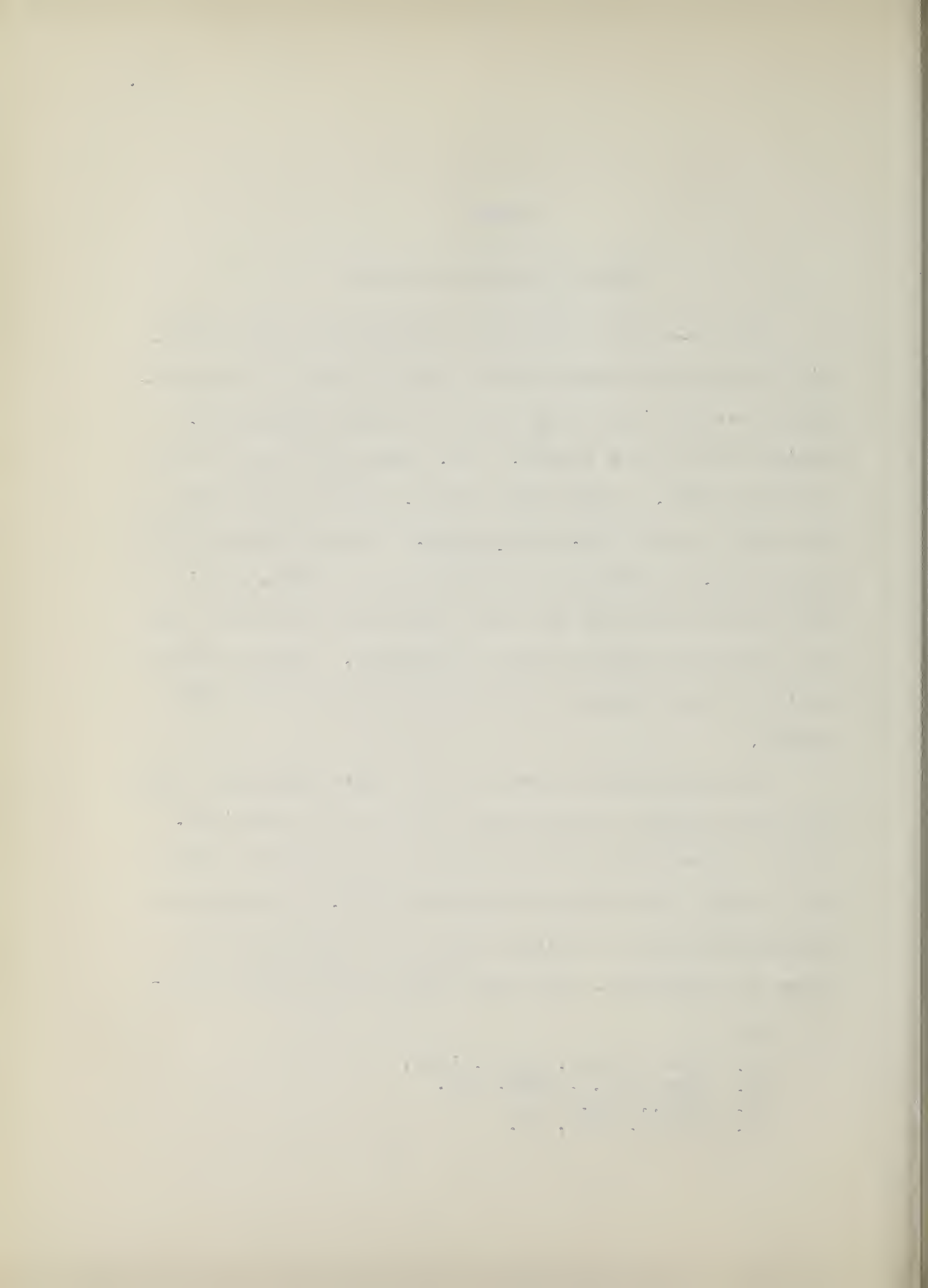
CHAPTER VI

THE ANTINOMIAN CONTROVERSY

The so-called "Antinomian Controversy" was a whirlwind which nearly destroyed the young colony of the Massachusetts--and right at its center was Anne Hutchinson, beside her was John Cotton. Mrs. Hutchinson came to the colony in 1634, a year after Cotton, coming on the same boat that brought him, the Griffin.¹ She had known Cotton in England, belonging to his congregation there, and it was not long after he left that she decided to follow him; she needed the words of Life he preached.² Soon after her arrival in New England she became a member of the Boston church.³

Anne Hutchinson seems to have been a personable woman who early won her way into the hearts of the colonists. Cotton commends her and writes that "at her first coming she was well respected and esteemed of me."⁴ She had an ingratiating way of "being a woman very helpful in the times of childbirth, and other occasions of bodily infir-

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1. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 134n.
 2. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 174.
 3. Ibid., 158.
 4. Cotton, WCCC, 50.



mities."⁵ That she and those who gathered about her were of excellent demeanor is well attested to, and oddly enough it was one thing for which they were later criticized.

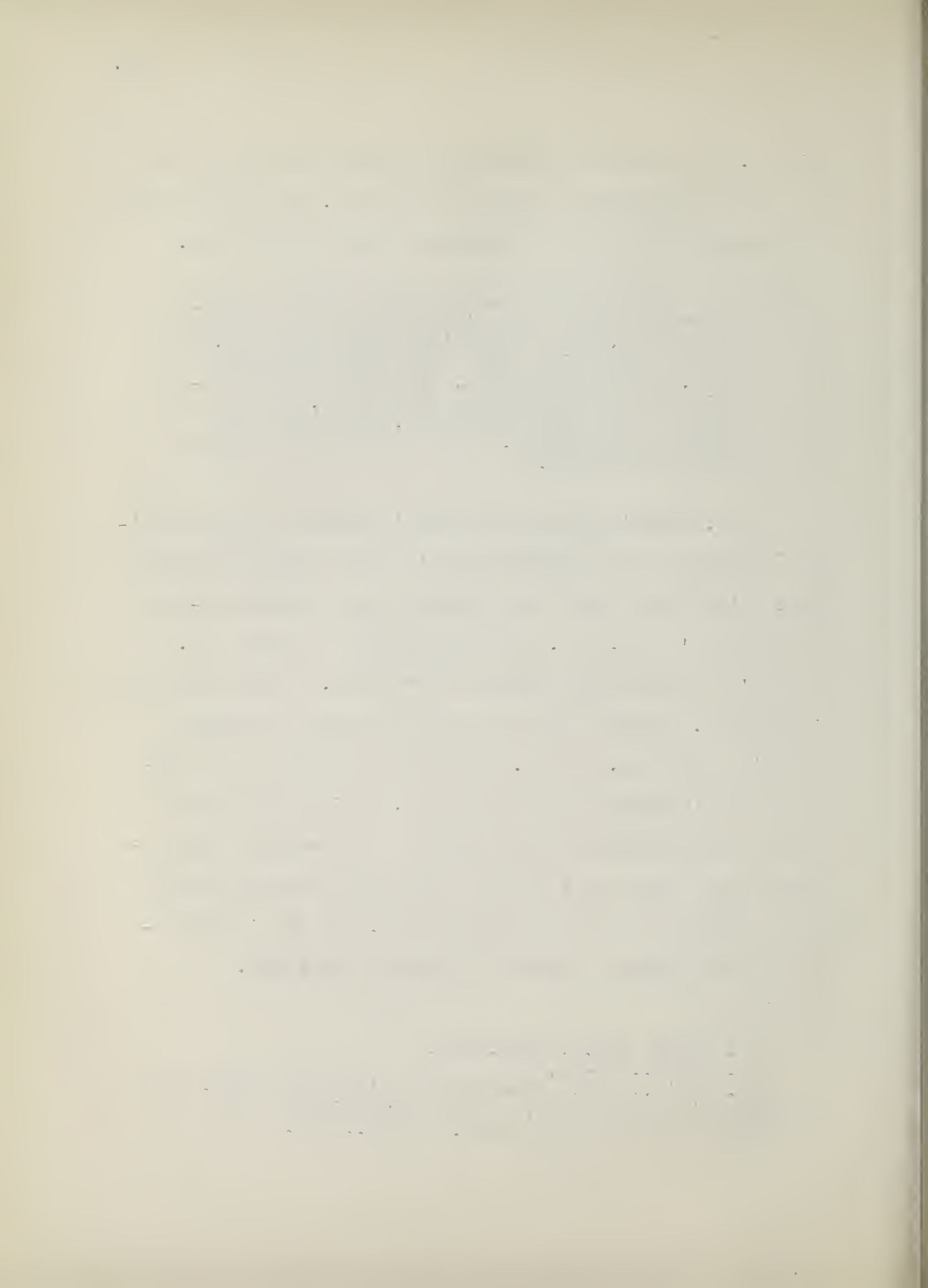
(Because such men as would seduce others, had need be some way eminent) they would appear very humble, holy, and Spirituall Christians, and full of Christ; they would deny themselves farre, speak excellently, pray with such soulevishing expressions and affections, that a stranger that loved goodnesse, could not but love and admire them, and so be the more easily drawne after them.⁶

Mrs. Hutchinson was not only interested in the physical welfare of her neighbors but in their spiritual welfare too. Since many women were unable to get to meeting-house on the Lord's Day, Mrs. Hutchinson began to repeat Mr. Cotton's sermons every Monday in her home. This was not an innovation. Groups often gathered at homes to discuss religious matters, as Mrs. Hutchinson reminded her accusers: "It is lawful for me so to do, as it is all your practices and can you find a warrant for yourself and condemn me for the same thing?"⁷ There were several reasons why a hue and cry went up against her, but the irregularity of her meetings was not a forceful objection.

5. Adams (ed.), ACBM, 158.

6. Ibid., 75-76.

7. Ibid., 238. "There were private meetings, and are still in many places, of some few neighbors, but not so publick & frequent as yours." Ibid., 166.

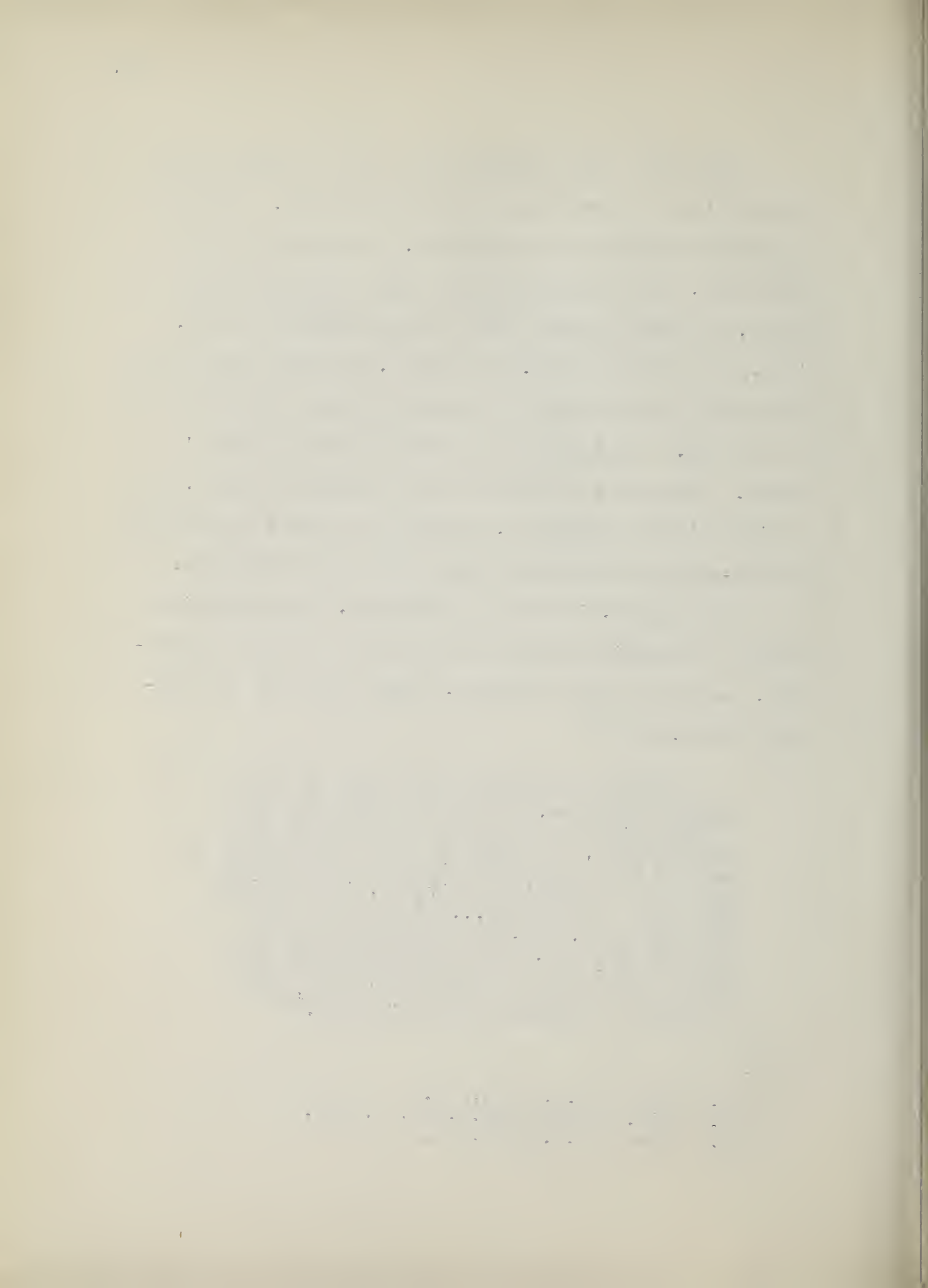


There were other meetings but none of them were so successful as the meetings of Anne Hutchinson. If only a handful of housewives had attended, all might have been overlooked, but to the Hutchinson home "resorted sundry of Boston, and other Townes about to the number of fifty, sixty, or eighty at once."⁸ In fact, the meetings were so successful that she had to hold two of them a week in place of just one.⁹ Probably that grated on the ministers' nerves. Although they liked to see religion prosper, and at first "it was winked at," still it was hard for them to see lay-sponsored meetings draw such large attendance.

Furthermore, it must be confessed, the Antinomians became a disturbing element in the regular church gatherings. As one of the ministers, Thomas Welde of the Roxbury church, put it:

After our Sermons were ended at our publike Lectures, you might have seene halfe a dozen Pistols discharged at the face of the Preacher, (I meane) so many objections made by the opinionists in the open assembly against our doctrine delivered, if it suited not their new fancies...and this done not once and away, but, from day to day after our Sermons; yea, they would come when they heard a Minister was upon such a point as was like to strike at their opinions, with a purpose to oppose him to his face.¹⁰

- 8. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 79.
- 9. Ibid.; Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 240.
- 10. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 82.



The straw which seems to have broken the back of the ministers' patience, however, was Mrs. Hutchinson's uncomplimentary comparison of the other ministers with Mr. Cotton, her teacher, and John Wheelwright, her brother-in-law; she said "none of them did preach the covenant of free Grace...and that they have not the Seale of the Spirit."¹¹ Cotton and Wheelwright preached a Covenant of Grace; the others preached a Covenant of Works. It is not too clear just what Mrs. Hutchinson meant by a Covenant of Grace, but she felt that holiness was a state of heart and not simply good works. She was convinced that righteousness was an inner experience.

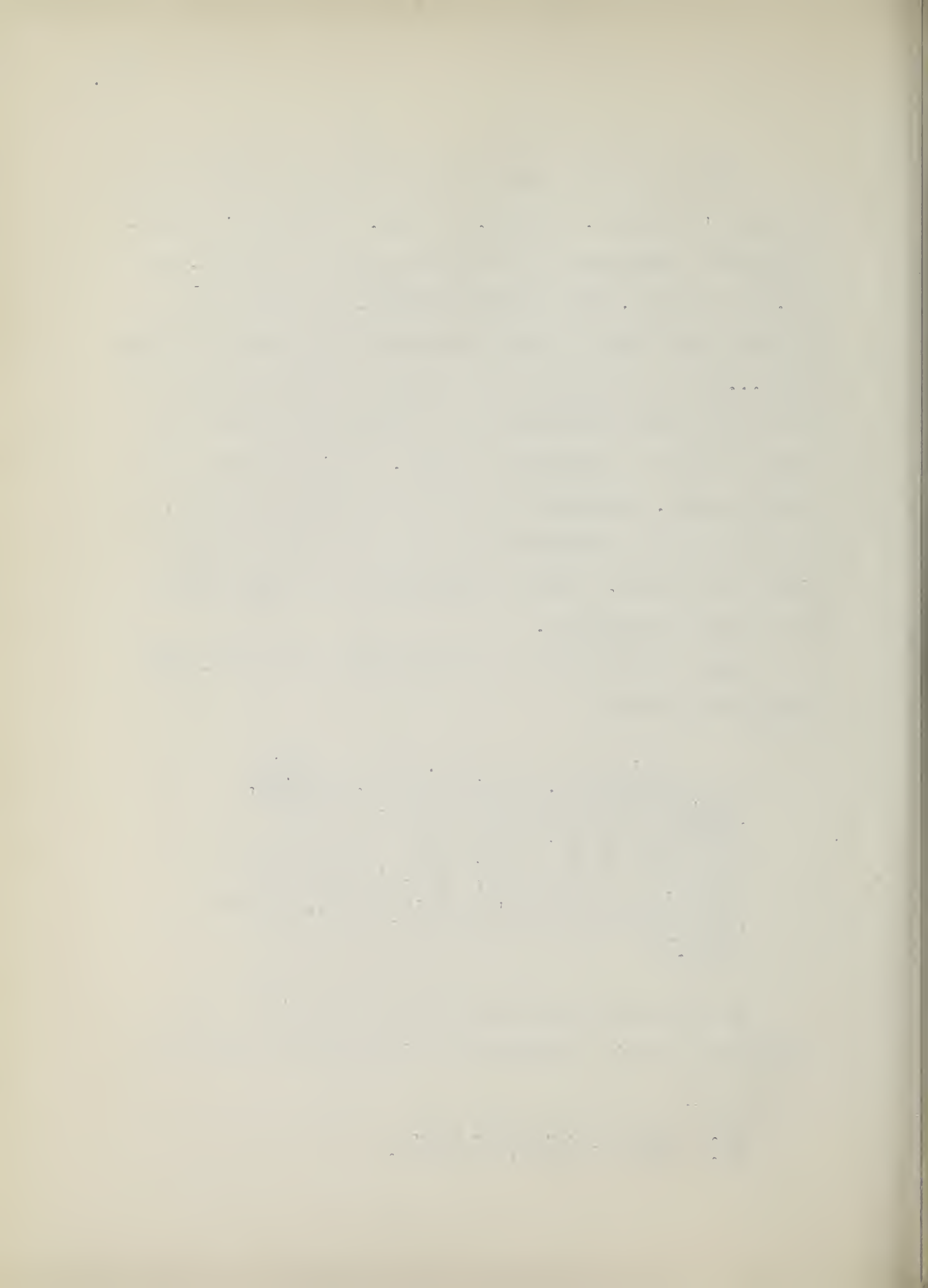
Asked how one knew if he were among the elect, Anne Hutchinson replied:

It is not by conduct, not by obeying the commandments, by giving alms, praying, fasting or wearing a long face. All that implies a mere Covenant of Works. Such things are good in themselves but do not prove the state of one's heart, which alone counts. A serene spirit coming from the consciousness of God's spirit within, proves to the true believer that he is among the elect.¹²

By the time the battle was over both sides "were hopelessly lost in a thick fog of indefinable ideas and

11. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 169.

12. Quoted in Rugg, UNA, 119.



meaningless phrases."¹³ Cotton Mather years later wrote

The mother opinion [of the controversy] was 'that a Christian should not fetch any evidence of his good state before God, from the sight of any inherent qualification in him; or from any conditional promise made unto such a qualification.'¹⁴

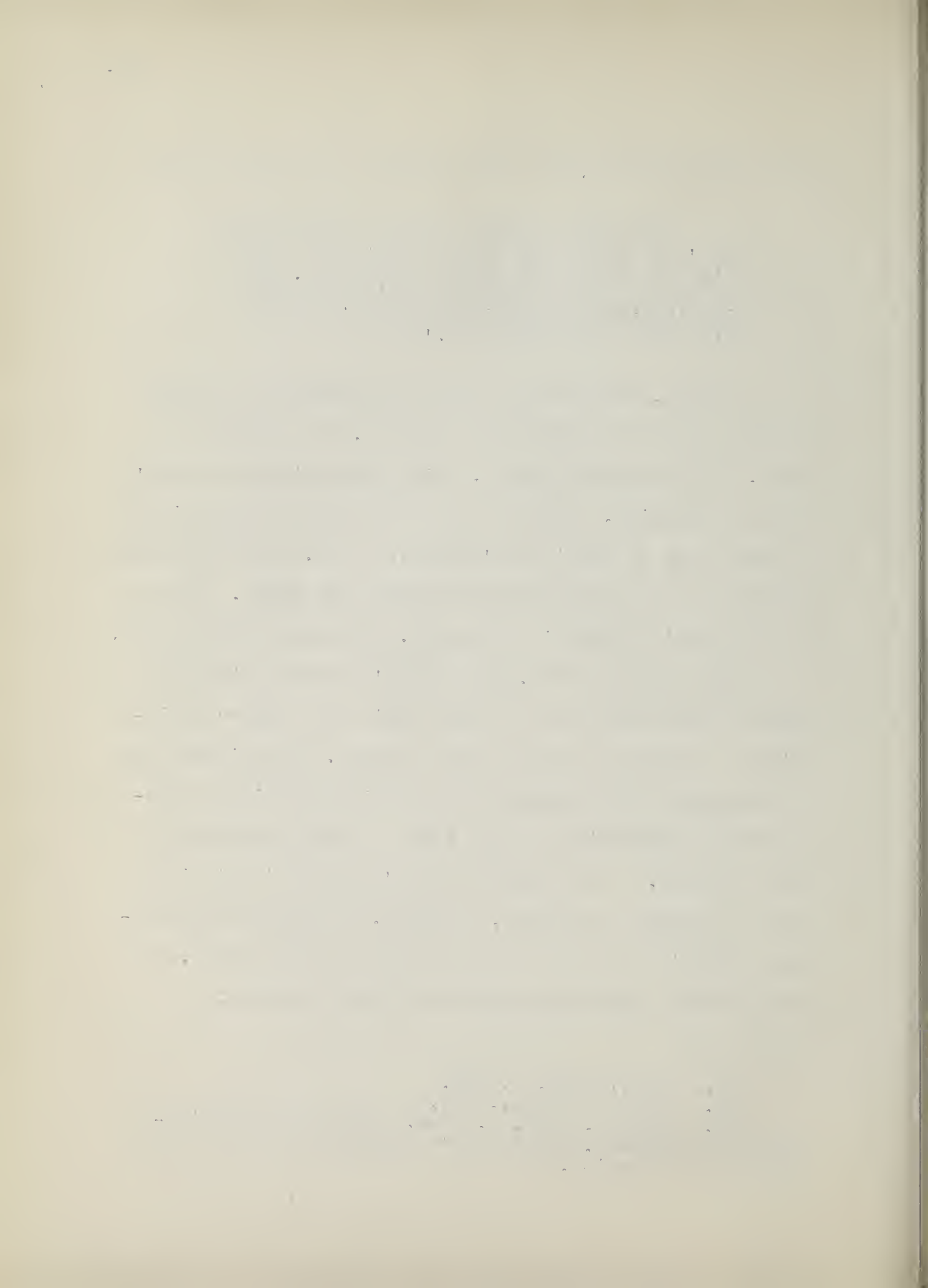
For Mrs. Hutchinson it was not attendance at public worship, nor acts of Christian charity, nor reading the Bible, nor periods of prayer, which gave evidence of one's being a Christian. Rather it was the conscious experience of the spirit of God in one's heart. This, and this alone, furnished proof of Christian character and worth. If one had the spirit of God in his heart, he needed nothing else.

The essence of Mrs. Hutchinson's quarrel with the clergy seems to be that she laid claim to a source of inspiration which was beyond their control. In this she was a forerunner of the Quakers who were later to invade Massachusetts and claim an inner light as the sole guide of their conduct.¹⁵ The "state of one's heart" is difficult for an outsider to discern. Besides, if God dealt personally with his children without benefit of the clergy, the clergy might become dispensable and then disposed.

13. Adams, TEMH, I, 527.

14. Quoted in *ibid.*, 493.

15. Andrews, CPAH, I, 479n, points out the similarity between Mrs. Hutchinson's teachings and the Quaker tenets of the period.



A Short Story, the contemporary account of the Controversy written by John Winthrop, records eighty-two errors "found to have been brought into New England, and spread under-hand," which were condemned by the Synod of 1637.¹⁶ Each error listed is followed by its "confutation." Here are a few typical errors to show how unintelligible the argument is to our minds.

Error 14 That Christ workes in the regenerate, as in those that are dead, and not as in those that are alive, or, the regenerate after conversion, are altogether dead to spiritual acts.

Error 29 An hypocrite may have these two witnesses, I John 5.5, that is to say the water and the blood.

Error 38 There can be no true closing with Christ in a promise that hath a qualification or condition expressed.

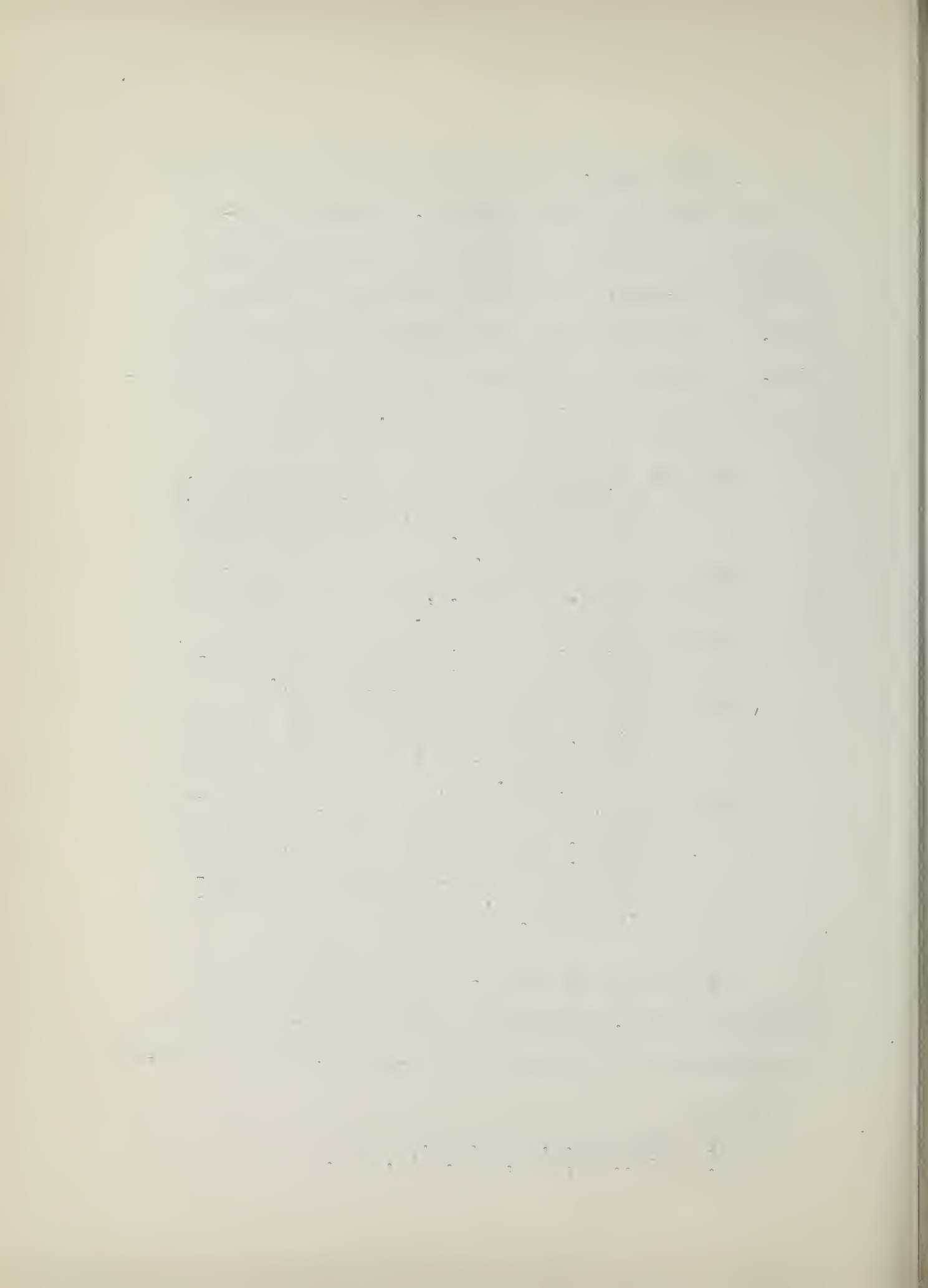
Error 47 The Seale of the Spirit is limited onely to the immediate witnesse of the Spirit, and doth never witnesse to any worke of grace, or to any conclusion by a Syllogisme.

Error 77 Sanctification is so farre from evidencing a good estate that it darkens it rather, and a man may more clearly see Christ, when he seeth no sanctification then when he doth, the darker my sanctification is, the brighter is my justification.¹⁷

How many of the eighty-two errors were directly traceable to Mrs. Hutchinson cannot be said. But to all appearances she was their fountain-source, so the ministers

16. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 95.

17. Ibid., 99, 104, 107, 110, 119.



of the colony determined to go to her teacher, whose comparison with them had placed him involuntarily in the middle of the scene. Besides "the whole church of Boston (some few excepted) were become her new converts, and infected with her opinions."¹⁸ Cotton's own standing in the matter was not beyond suspicion.

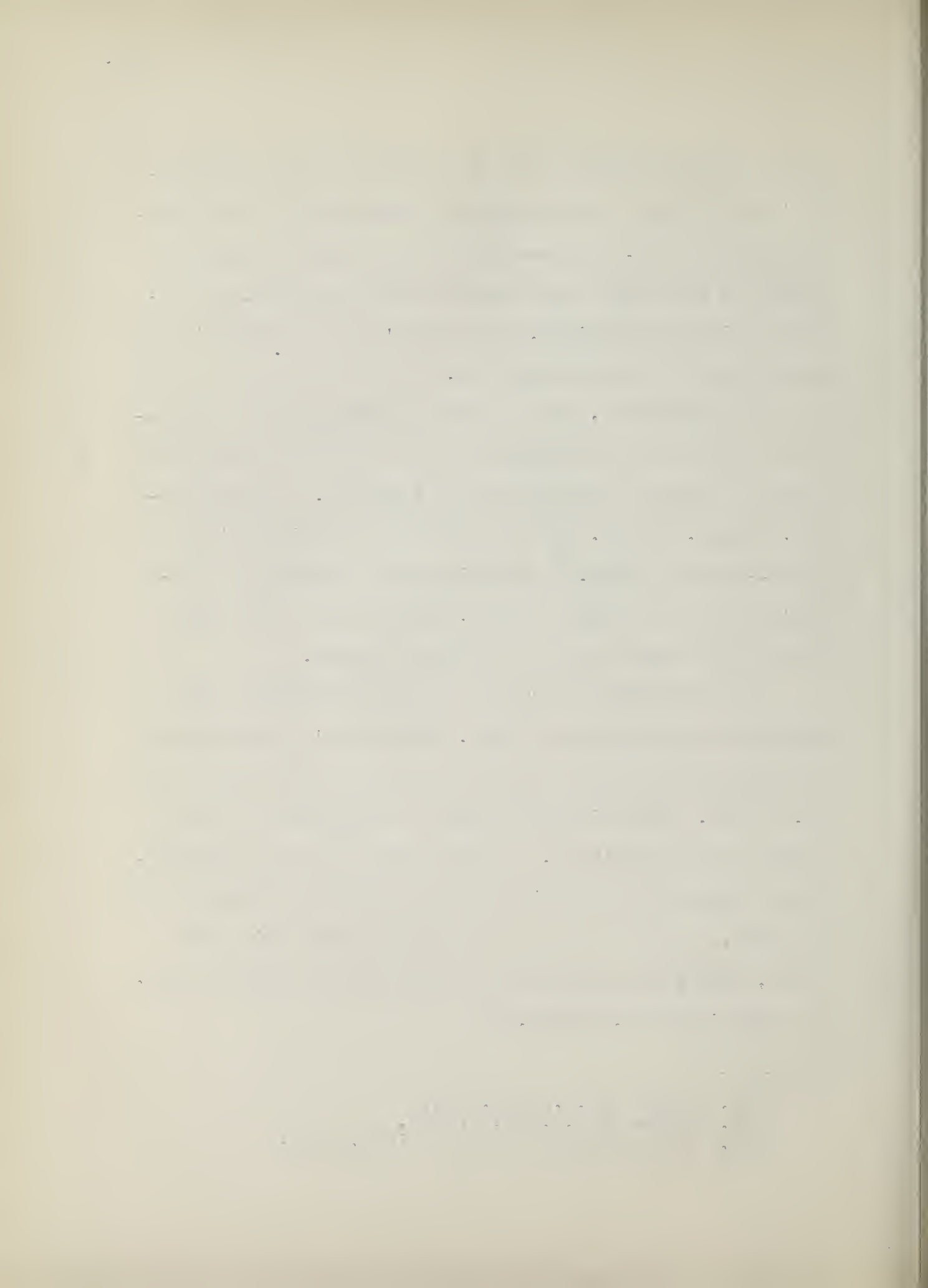
On October 25, 1636 a group of clergymen met in Boston to talk over the situation with a view to writing the church at Boston to deal with her heretics. At the meeting, though, was Mr. Cotton and he gave "Satisfaction to them"--for the nonce.¹⁹ This is another example of Cotton's ability to carry the day, but end up on the wrong side of the ledger when the week has passed.

The following Lord's Day in the meetinghouse the motion was made by some of Mrs. Hutchinson's sympathizers that John Wheelwright be called as an associate teacher to Mr. Cotton. John Winthrop spoke in opposition to Wheelwright and his doctrine. In the discussion that followed, it was apparent that Cotton leaned toward the objectionable theology. A day or two later Winthrop "wrote his mind fully, with such scriptures and arguments as came to hand, and sent it to Mr. Cotton."²⁰

18. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 161.

19. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 196.

20. This paragraph based on *ibid.*, 199.

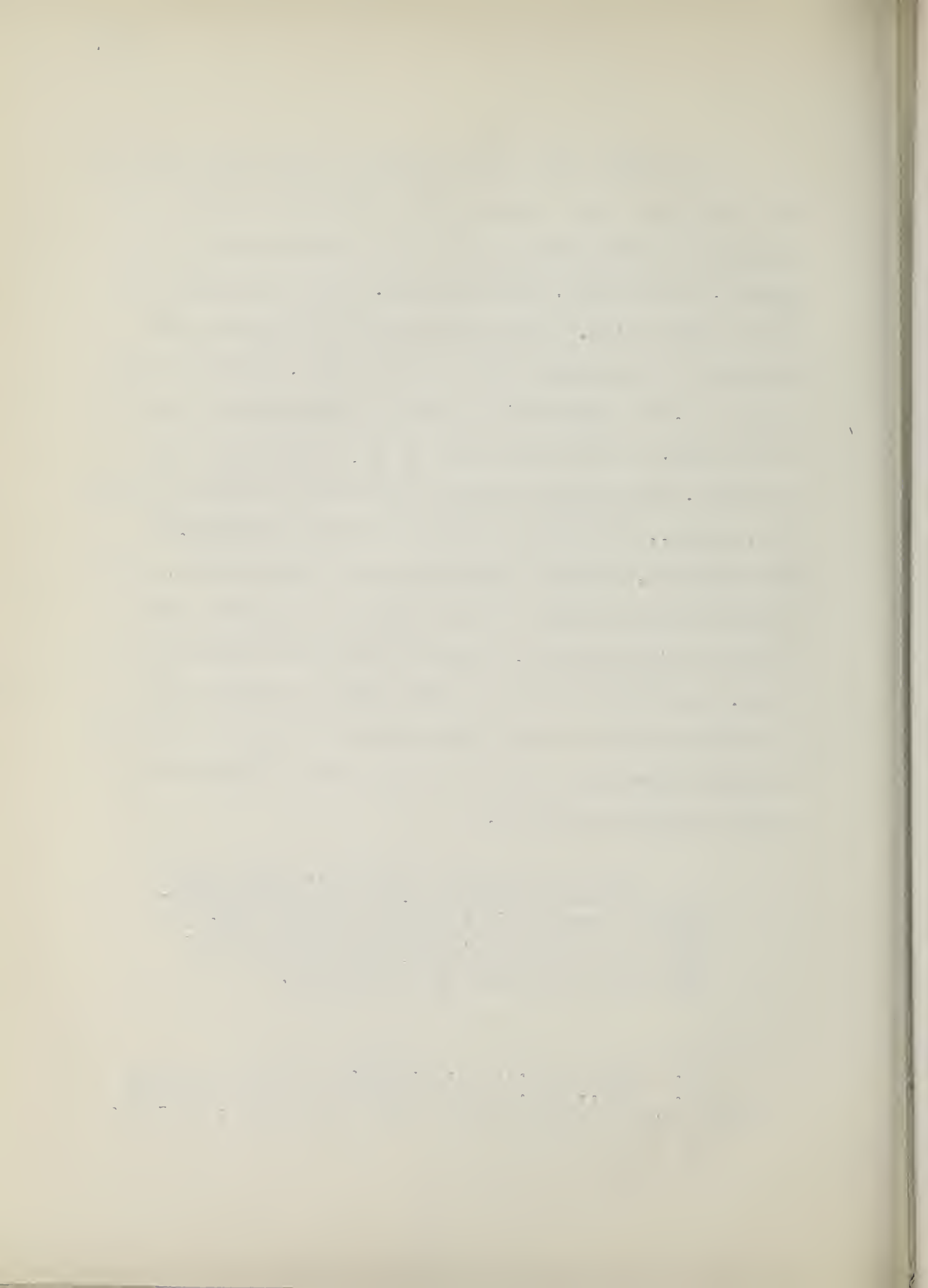


In December the breach widened in the Boston church; Governor Henry Vane together with Cotton and all the congregation "except four or five" were on one side, and the pastor, John Wilson, John Winthrop, and a few others were on the other side. The disputation was carried on "in writing, for the peace sake of the church, which all were tender of."²¹ Pastor Wilson made a speech before the General Court, "a very sad speech of the condition of our churches," for which condition he blamed the views of Cotton, et al., although he did not mention any names.²² Nevertheless, everyone understood whom Wilson meant. And, understandably enough, Cotton failed to appreciate the words of his colleague, feeling that he had spoken out of turn, "so he and diverse of them went to admonish him." In defense of his speech Wilson explained that he was only speaking generally and was not referring to the Boston church "more than others."

But this would not satisfy...they called him to answer publickly...and there the governor Vane pressed it violently against him, and all the congregation, except the deputy Winthrop and one or two more, and many of them with much bitterness and reproaches.

21. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 201.

22. Ibid., 204. The remainder of this paragraph and the whole of the next are from this source, 204-206.

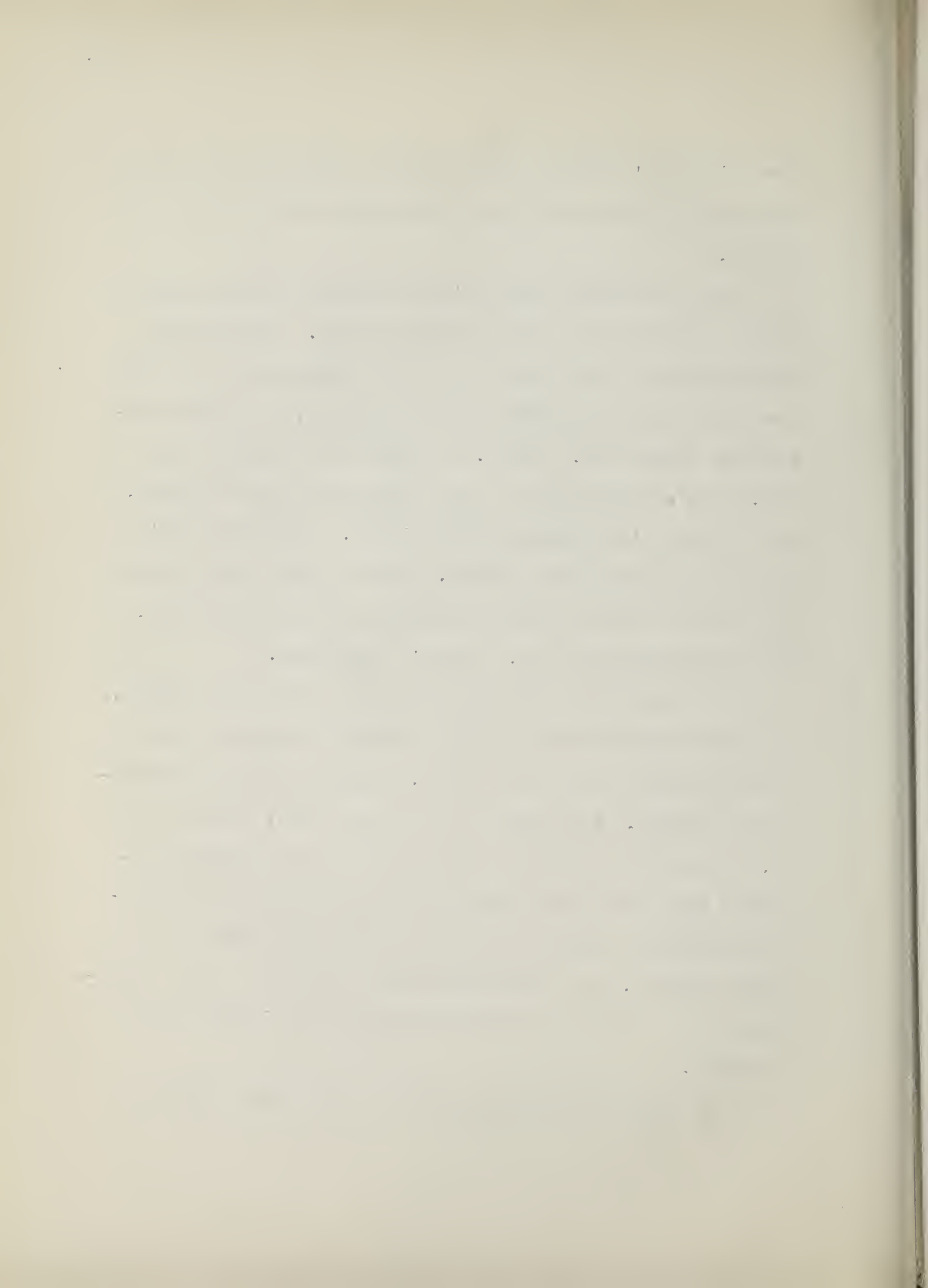


Even Winthrop's quiet style suggests something of the heat generated by the quarrel which now threatened to split the church.

The following Sunday Wilson preached and was able to pour a little oil on the troubled waters. And Winthrop again took his pen in hand to write Cotton, "and laid before him diverse failings (as he supposed,) and some reasons to justify Mr. Wilson, and dealt very plainly with him." "Mr. Cotton made a very loving and gentle answer," but he was still offended with Wilson. Winthrop replied to him "in like loving manner," yet he sent a new defense of Wilson to the two ruling elders of the congregation, "and answered all of Mr. Cotton's arguments."

Not only was Cotton in hot water in his own church, but the other ministers in the colony were uneasy about some opinions attributed to him. Perhaps he had been converted by Mrs. Hutchinson for all they knew, perhaps he was an active supporter of her as well as a sympathizer. Anyway they could not escape the fact that all the heterodox opinions floating in the air had their origin in the Boston church. And John Cotton was teacher of that congregation; as such he was responsible for its instruction in doctrine.

He had satisfied the ministers in October but in



December they were back knocking at his door. Two weeks earlier they had

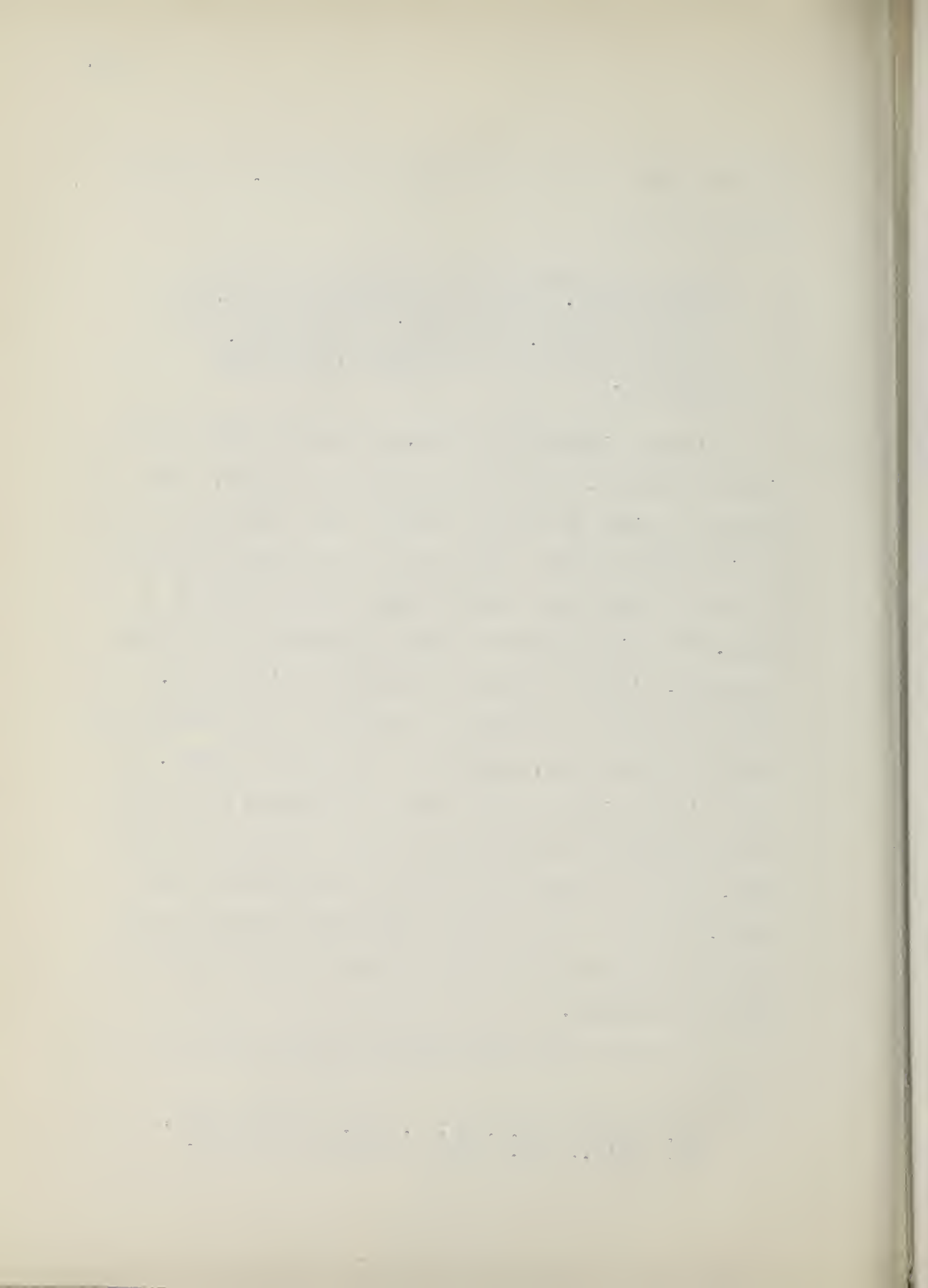
drawn into heads all the points wherein they suspected Mr. Cotton did differ from them, and had propounded them to him, and pressed him to a direct answer, affirmative or negative, to everyone; which he had promised, and taken time for.²³

Although he took the time, he had not come forward with the answers. So his questioners were back. This time they had decided on sixteen queries which they put to him. The importance of the questions and his answers signified by the fact that many "copies thereof were dispersed about."²⁴ While Cotton was able to appease his brethren partially, "in some things he gave not satisfaction." During the next few months the questions were shuttled from Cotton to colleagues, agreement never being reached. So vital did the issues seem to the participants that when the next ministerial meeting was held in Boston in March 1637, it was decided to put off all lectures for three weeks, that the clergy might devote the time ordinarily taken in preparation for the lectures to the resolving of their differences.

In January 1637 John Wheelwright had poured oil on

23. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 203. Italics mine.

24. Ibid., 207. This paragraph from here.



the fire by preaching a fast day sermon in the Boston church in which he said among other things:

Wheresoever we live, if we would have the Lord Jesus Christ to be abundantly present with us, we must all of us prepare for battle, and come out against the enemies of the Lord; and if we do not strive, those under a Covenant of Works will prevail.²⁵

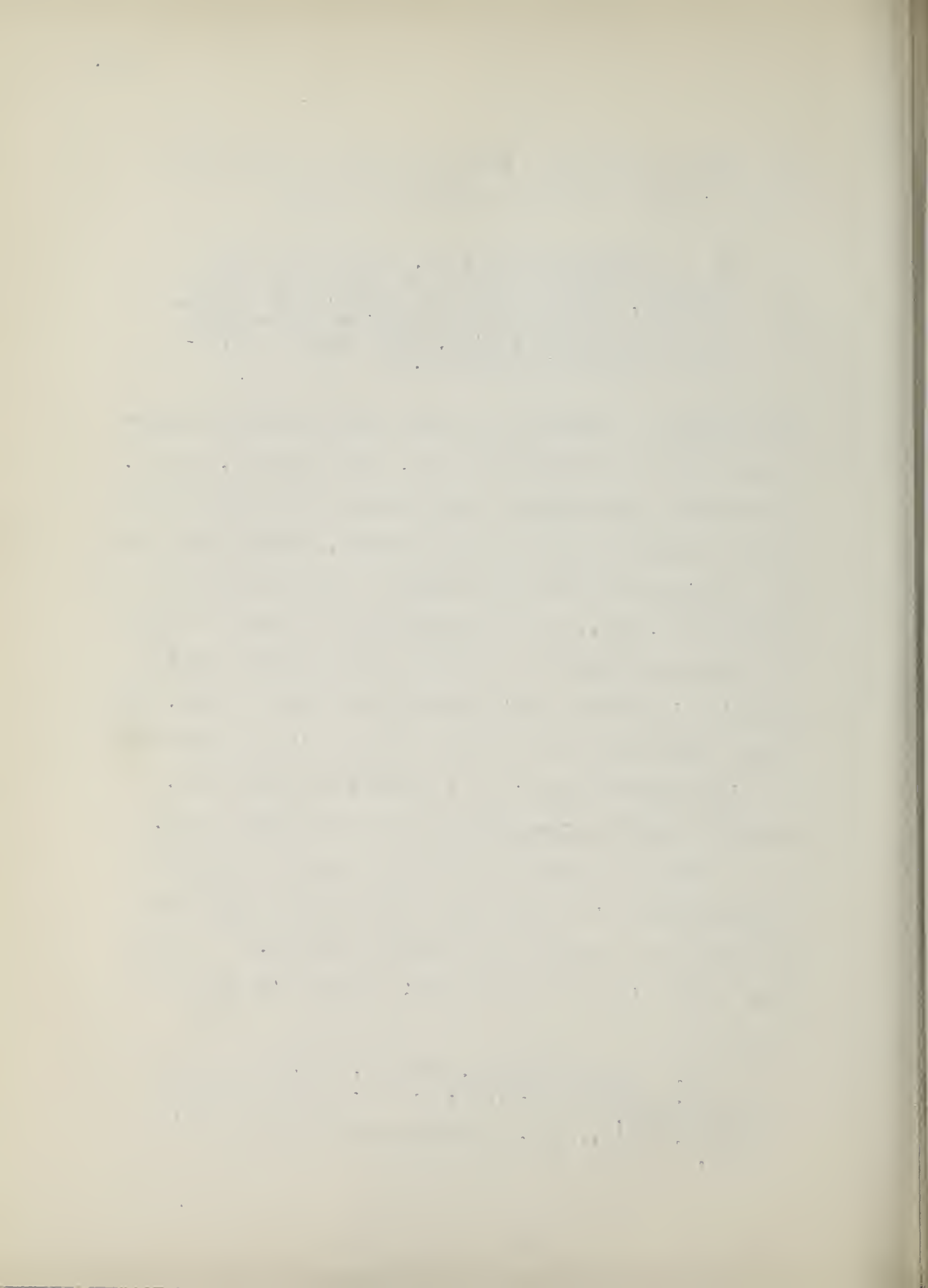
Those "under a Covenant of Works" could hardly be anyone except the rest of the ministers, other than Mr. Cotton. Accordingly, the General Court in March 1637 found Wheelwright guilty of sedition and contempt, because "the court had appointed the fast as a means of reconciliation of the differences, etc., and he purposely set himself to kindle and increase them"²⁶ The Boston church brought forth a petition in Wheelwright's behalf but it was in vain. The Court asked the other ministers whether it had the power to silence Wheelwright; the ministers were not sure. Sentence was therefore deferred until the next court.

There is probably a world of words and wrangling behind Winthrop's simple words "much heat of contention was this court between the opposite parties."²⁷ Cotton was on the side of the minority, and when the majority

25. Quoted in Adams, TEMH, I, 439.

26. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 211. This paragraph based on this.

27. Ibid., 212. This paragraph based on this source.



party proposed to hold the next Court at Newtown, there was little Cotton's party could do to defeat the motion, although Governor Vane did refuse to consider the motion. Still John Endicott did consider it, and the motion passed.

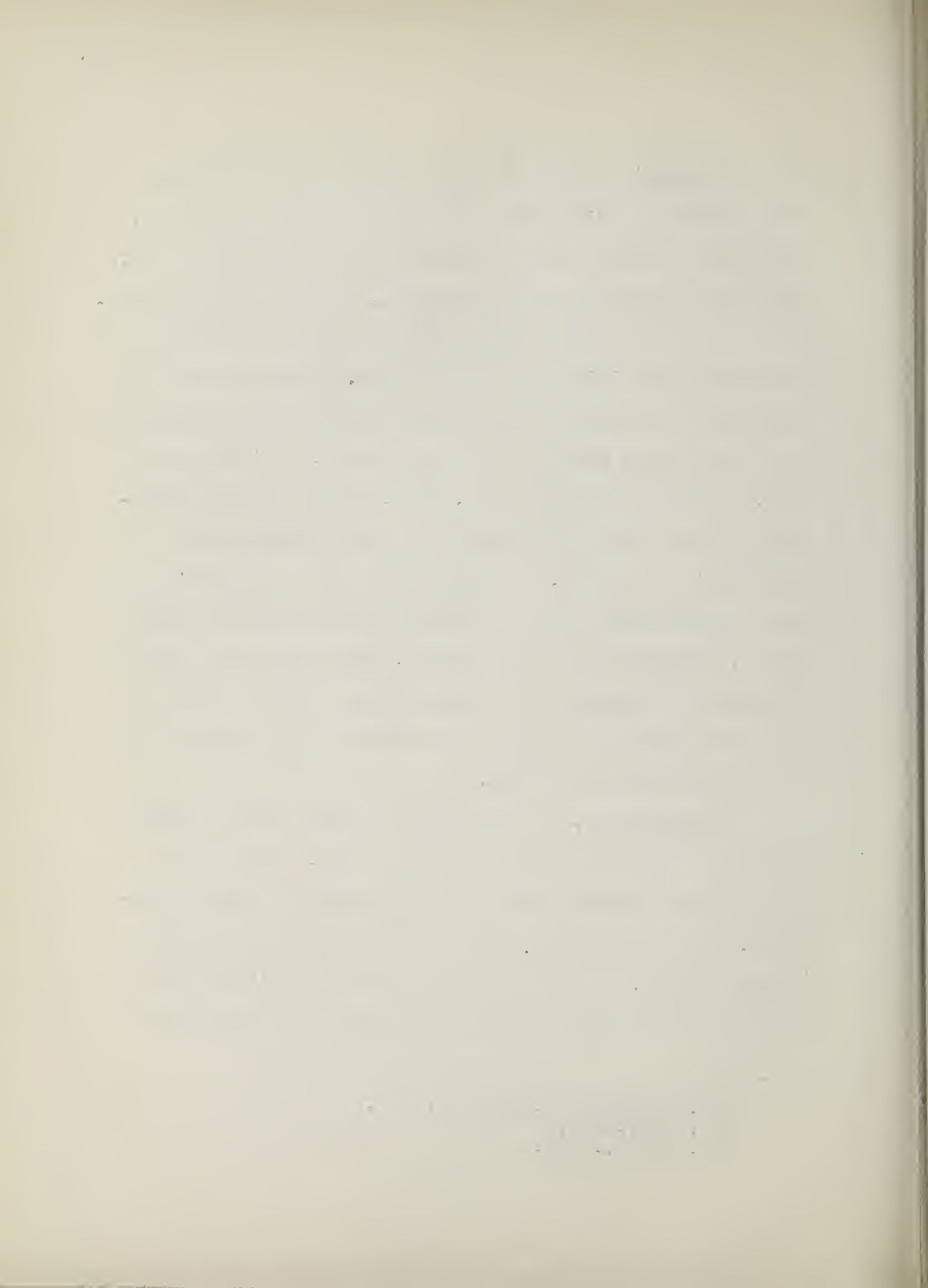
As we have seen, Henry Vane and John Cotton were good friends, Vane living in Cotton's home.. In the mind of the ordinary citizen of the Massachusetts Bay Colony Henry Vane and John Cotton stood for the same thing, as indeed they did. At the election in May, 1633, Henry Vane was defeated for the office of Governor and John Winthrop was elected in his place.²⁸ Other Boston men of Cotton's party were removed from office--William Coddington and Richard Hough, "being all of that faction, were left quite out."²⁹ This must be regarded as a defeat for Cotton as well as for the rejected officials, particularly the dismissal of Vane from the governorship.

Nevertheless, the political turnover did not solve the theological dissension in the colony. During the first week of August Henry Vane retreated by boat to England, and the ministers of the colony no doubt breathed a little easier, feeling that one of the Devil's minions had been routed.³⁰ Still all was not quiet on the religious

28. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 215.

29. Loc. cit.

30. Ibid., 229.



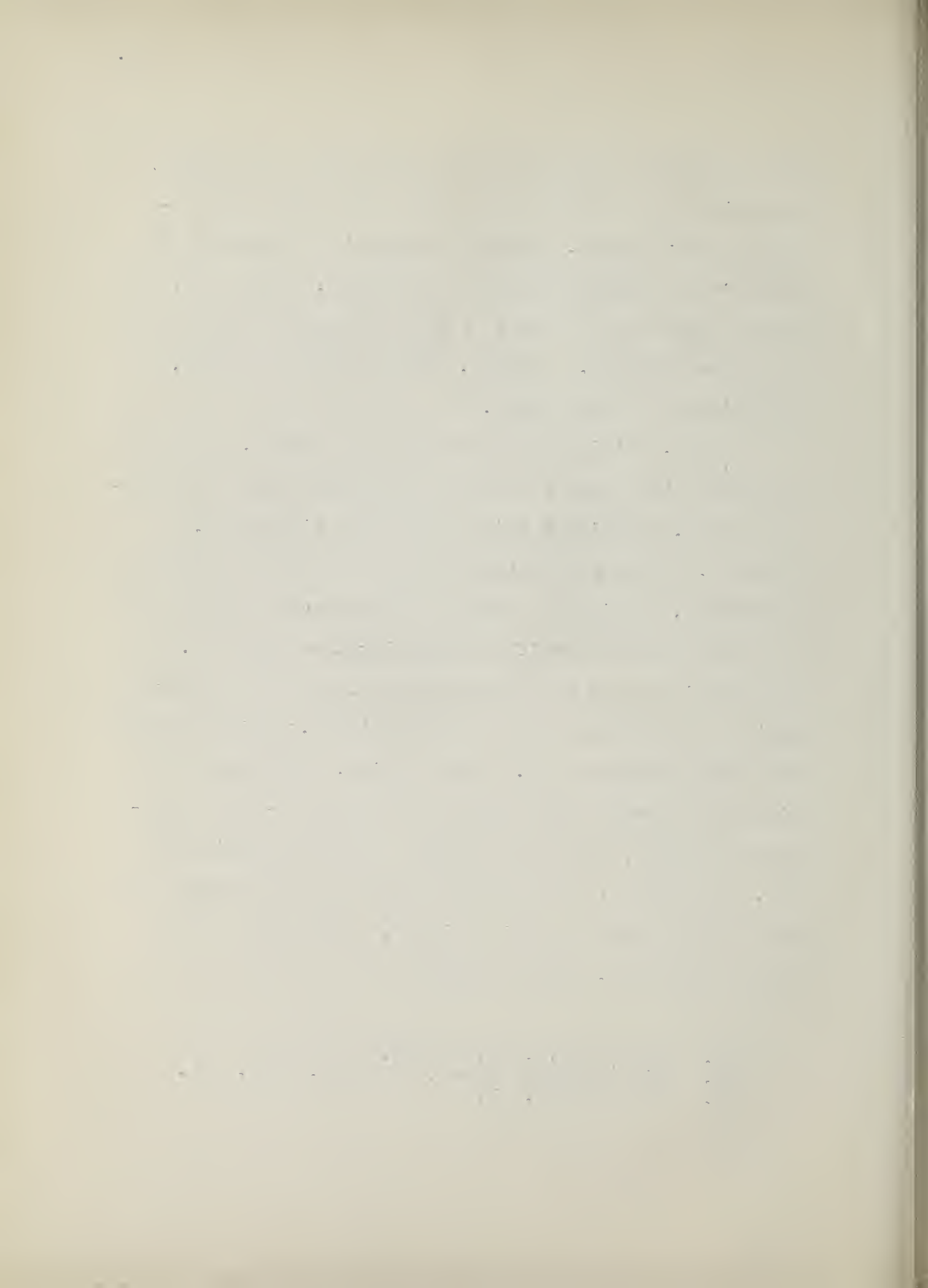
front; doctrinal brickbats were tossed about all summer. Wheelwright was brought before the court again and censured; a poor layman, Stephen Greensmith was censured by the Court "for saying that all the elders, except two, did preach a covenant of works;" a day of humiliation was held in all the churches. Finally, other measures failing, it was decided to hold a synod.³¹

Cotton, writing a decade after the events, says that the elders first came to him and complained about the opinions of Mrs. Hutchinson which were being circulated.³² Thereupon, Cotton reprimanded his most prominent female parishioner, telling her both of her erroneous tenets "and the injury done to myself in fathering them upon mee." Mrs. Hutchinson and the others denied that they held such opinions; so Cotton reported to the elders, asking them the best thing for him to do. They replied, "publickely and privately to bear witness against the errors"--which Cotton says he did, but to no effect. For the "opinionists" said, "No matter...what you heare him say in publicke; we know what he saith to us in private." That was a hard thrust to counter. Cotton admits

31. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 228.

32. This paragraph based on Cotton, WCCC, 39f.

33. Cotton, WCCC, 41.



This answer bred in some of my Brethren and friends a jealousy that my selfe was a secret fomenter of this spirit of Familisme, if not leavened myself that way.

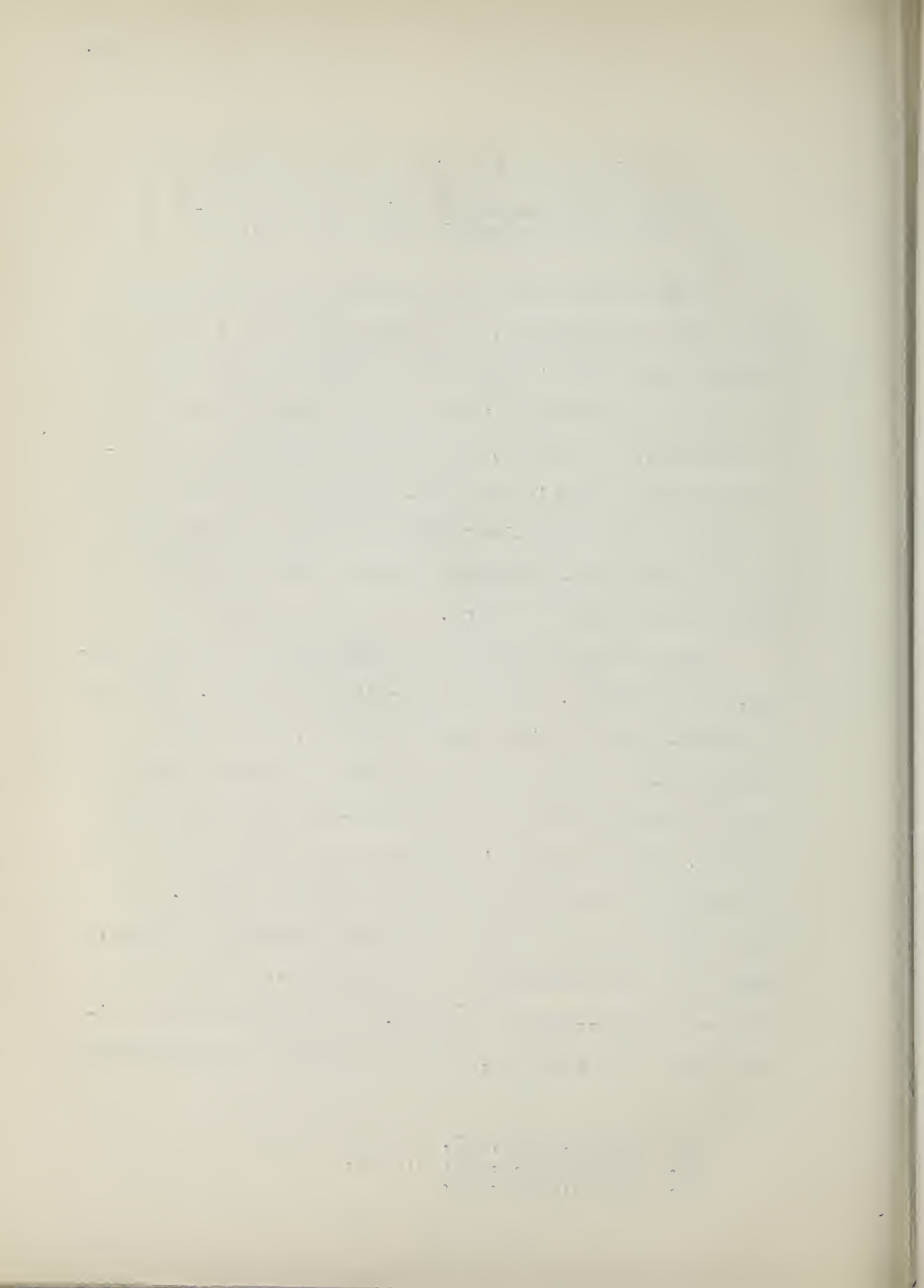
A synod seemed the only possible means of achieving peace among the churches. In preparation for it there was compiled from Cotton's works (his written sermons) a digest of "all such opinions of mine as were conceived by some to be erroneous."³³ In all, five dubious doctrines were uncovered among Cotton's homilies, but to each of the five he was able to muster up the orthodox answer. The ministers had to be sure Mrs. Hutchinson and not John Cotton was the source of the current heresy.

When the Synod finally got under way the last of August, Peter Bulkley, pastor of the Concord church, and Thomas Hooker, pastor of the Hartford church, were chosen moderators.³⁴ Almost the first order of business was the reading and discussion of the eighty-two errors mentioned earlier. Some of Cotton's members were ready (to his consternation) to arise and defend some of the errors. He told them if they did that "all these Bastardly Opinions, which are justly offensive to the Churches, will be fath-
ered on Boston"--and her teacher.³⁵ To make his own position clear in the matter, just in case any of these members

33. Cotton, WCCC, 41.

34. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 232.

35. Cotton, WCCC, 47.



had been too voluble, he told the assembly: "I esteemed some of the Opinions to bee blasphemous; some of them hereticall; many of them, Erroneous; and almost all of them, incommodiously expressed."³⁶

In spite of this effort to absolve himself of suspicion, Cotton admits "there was some colour of my leaning to one Antinomian Tenent in one day of the Synod."³⁷ While the clergy were questioning Wheelwright, Cotton came out with the remark, "God may be said to justifie me before the habit, or act Faith, and the habit is the effect of my Justification."³⁸ We may not know what Cotton meant, and perhaps his listeners did not understand either, but they did not like what they heard anyway. The other ministers spent the entire next day "disputing and arguing that Point" with the Boston teacher. After one day of wrangling Cotton, no doubt glad to divert attention from himself, freely declared that he consented with them in their point.

Eventually the synod evolved to a consideration of Mrs. Hutchinson. The upshot of the discussion was several resolutions, the first being

36. Cotton, WCCC, 48.

37. Loc. cit.

38. Ibid., 50. This paragraph based on this source.

That though women might meet (some few together) to pray and edify one another; yet such a set assembly, (as was then in practice at Boston,) where sixty or more did meet every week, and one woman...took upon her the whole exercise, was agreed to be disorderly, and without rule.³⁹

Although she was not named, Mrs. Hutchinson was certainly whom the clergy had in mind, as Winthrop indicates by his parenthetical remarks. The hope was that having removed Cotton from the side of questionable orthodoxy and having made Mrs. Hutchinson's meetings illegal, spiritual matters in the colony would take a turn for the better. They were mistaken--the heretics "persisted in their opinions, and were as busy in nourishing contentions (the principal of them) as before."⁴⁰

As the Fall wore on it was decided to bring Mrs. Hutchinson before the General Court for a thorough examination. The Court met at Newtown, probably to lessen the number of Bostonians who could attend the trial.⁴¹ One of the writers on the Controversy has said that Anne Hutchinson in her battle with the theocrats "had her tongue..as a sword, and she had her sex for a shield." On the witness stand her sex was a poor defense, but her tongue did yeo-

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39. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 234.

40. Ibid., 239.

41. For the difficulties of getting from Boston to Cambridge, see Adams, TEMH, I, 453f.

man's service, often striking a telling blow against her opponents. The records as they come down to us show her as able, if not abler, than any of her antagonists.

During her questioning at Court, she showed herself to be more familiar with the Bible than most ministers. Asked to justify her meetings Biblically, she retorted: "Will you please give me a rule against it, and I will yeeld."⁴² Pressed for a justification she quoted from Peter's speech at Pentecost where God is made to say, "I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." (Acts 2:17) A further proof demanded of her, she cited Priscilla instructing Apollos. (Acts 18:26).

Court Yet you shew us not a rule.

Hutch I have given you two places of Scripture.

Court But neither of them sute your practice.

Hutch Must I shew my name written therein.⁴³

At that point a titter probably ran through the court.

Again, in the course of the trial Governor Winthrop was conducting the questioning. He was trying to prove her meetings were contrary to Scripture because men attended them, and to show that a woman has no Scriptural right to instruct a man.

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42. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 167.

43. Ibid., 168, 169.

- Gov. ...but suppose that a man should come and say Mrs. Hutchinson I hear that you are a woman that God hath given his grace unto and you have knowledge in the word of God I pray instruct me a little, ought you not to instruct this man?
- Hut. I think I may.--Do you think it not lawful for me to teach women and why do you call me to teach the Court?
- Gov. We do not call you to teach the Court but to lay open yourself.⁴⁴

Winthrop finally said that her meetings caused women to neglect their domestic duties, and heretical opinions to be fostered, and ministers to be slighted; so her meetings must be stopped by the Court. To this imposing array of accusations Mrs. Hutchinson replied:

- Mrs. H. If you have a rule from God's word you may.
- Gov. W. We are your judges, and not you ours...⁴⁵

Or so Winthrop thought. History, however, has seen that it was the Puritan colony of Massachusetts which was on trial and not Anne Hutchinson.

John Cotton was on the defensive for Mrs. Hutchinson during her trial before the General Court. Perhaps he felt his reputation was in a sense on trial with her, and so he did his utmost to have her acquitted. At first he stayed in the background, but when he was called on to testify, he

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44. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 240.

45. Ibid., 241.

did his best for his parishioner and admirer. The occasion of his testimony was the attempt to decide exactly what Mrs. Hutchinson had said about the other ministers.

A meeting had been held a few months earlier in Cotton's home at which Cotton, Mrs. Hutchinson, and the other ministers had been present. The Court was trying to determine the nature of Anne Hutchinson's remarks at that conference. The other ministers affirmed that Mrs. Hutchinson had accused them of preaching a covenant of works. Cotton was called to bear witness to her words.

He began by saying he did not expect to be called as a witness, so he "did not labour to call to remembrance what was done."⁴⁶ He then proceeded to smooth out the alleged differences between himself and his fellow-ministers, concluding, "And I must say that I did not find her saying they were under a covenant of works, not that she said they did preach a covenant of works." Thereupon the Reverend Messrs. Peter and Weld endeavored to sharpen Cotton's memory, but to no avail. Finally Thomas Dudley interposed: "They affirm that Mrs. Hutchinson did say they were not able ministers of the new testament." Mr. Cotton replied: "I do not remember it."

As the trial progressed, Cotton's own position be-

46. This paragraph based on Adams (ed.), ACMB, 265-268.

came precarious. It developed that Mrs. Hutchinson had claimed to have personal revelations from the Most High; in this way she had learned that England was to be destroyed and that in New England she should be persecuted. John Endicott asked John Cotton "to speak freely whether he doth condesdend to such speeches of revelation as have been here spoken of."⁴⁷

Cotton began to hedge; he said there were different kinds of revelation and

though the word revelation be rare in common speech and we make it uncouth in our ordinary expressions, yet not withstanding, being understood in the scripture sense I think they are not only lawful but such as Christians may receive and God bear witness to it in his word.⁴⁸

He did not make it clear whether Mrs. Hutchinson's revelation could be "understood in the scripture sense."

There followed an exchange in which Thomas Dudley tried to get Cotton to declare himself; however, he would not. They talked at cross-purposes; Dudley intent on discovering the opinion of Cotton on Mrs. Hutchinson's revelations, Cotton interested in discussing Mrs. Hutchinson's assertion that God will save her from the Court.

47. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 273.

48. Loc. cit.



Dep. Gov. I desire Mr. Cotton to tell us whether you do approve of Mrs. Hutchinson's revelations as she laid them down.

Mr. Cotton I know not whether I do understand her, but this I say, if she doth expect a deliverance in a way of providence--then I cannot deny it.

Dep. Gov. No Sir, we did not speak of that.

Mr. Cotton If it be by way of miracle then I would suspect it.

Dep. Gov. Do you believe that her revelations are true?

Mr. Cotton That she may have some special providence of God to help her is a thing that I cannot bear witness against.

Dep. Gov. Good Sir, I do ask whether the revelation be of God or no?⁴⁹

Cotton would not say definitely. Therefore John Endicott tried his hand, asking:

I beseech you that you'd be pleased to speak a word to that which Mrs. Hutchinson hath spoken of her revelations as you have heard the manner of it. Whether do you witness for her or against her.⁵⁰

An ambiguous answer from Cotton satisfied Endicott, but not Dudley. Cotton formulated another answer. Dudley bluntly said, "Sir, you weary me and do not satisfy me." At this juncture Cotton came out into the open and admitted, "In that sense that she speaks I dare not bear witness against it."

49. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 274.

50. Ibid., 276.

The Court was horrified.⁵¹ Increase Nowell remarked it was a "devilish delusion;" Governor Winthrop said he had never read of the like--"it overthrows all;" Deputy Governor Dudley was sorry Cotton "should stand to justify her;" the Reverend Hugh Peter, "I can say the same and this runs to enthusiasm, and I think it very disputable which our brother Cotton hath spoken."

That Cotton was in an unpleasant position cannot be denied. Hugh Peter spoke the mind of the majority of the ministers present. The laity probably thought Cotton was behind the heresy of his notorious parishioner. One layman exclaimed, "It is a great burden to us that we should differ from Mr. Cotton and that he should justify these revelations."⁵² Then he asked Mr. Cotton to explain Mrs. Hutchinson's revelation about the destruction of England. Governor Winthrop came to Cotton's rescue: "Mr. Cotton is not called to answer anything but we are to deal with the party here standing before us."⁵³ Before the sentence of banishment was actually passed, Hugh Peter found opportunity to observe, "I profess I thought Mr. Cotton would never have took her part."⁵⁴

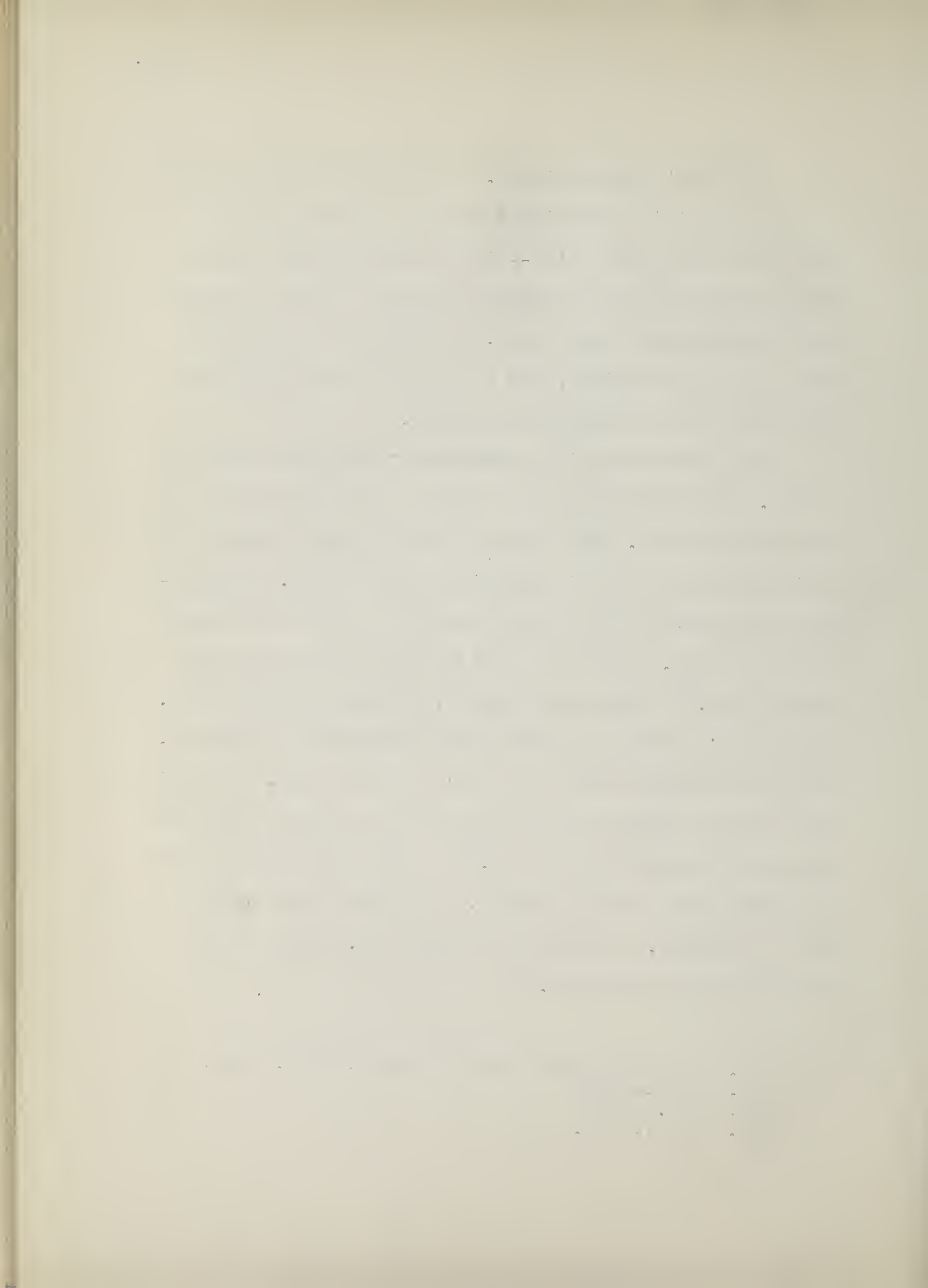
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51. This paragraph based on Adams, ACIB, 276f.

52. Ibid., 278.

53. Loc. cit.

54. Ibid., 283.



The trial of Mrs. Hutchinson took place in November 1637; by January 1638 Cotton was disassociating himself from the Antinomians, saying that they had made him their "stalking horse," and he "did spend most of his time, both publickly and privately, to discover those errors, and reduce such as had gone astray."⁵⁵

His tone at the Church trial of Mrs. Hutchinson is entirely different from his behavior before the General Court.⁵⁶ Here Cotton is the prosecutor, citing scriptural proofs to refute his parishioner's contentions. "Sister," he pleads, "doe not shut your eyes agaynst the truth."⁵⁷ He seems intent on showing how much at variance her views are with his own. This seeming volte-face has been called "the ignominious page in an otherwise worthy life", as though Cotton deliberately turned against his parishioner with no other thought in mind than clearing his own name.⁵⁸

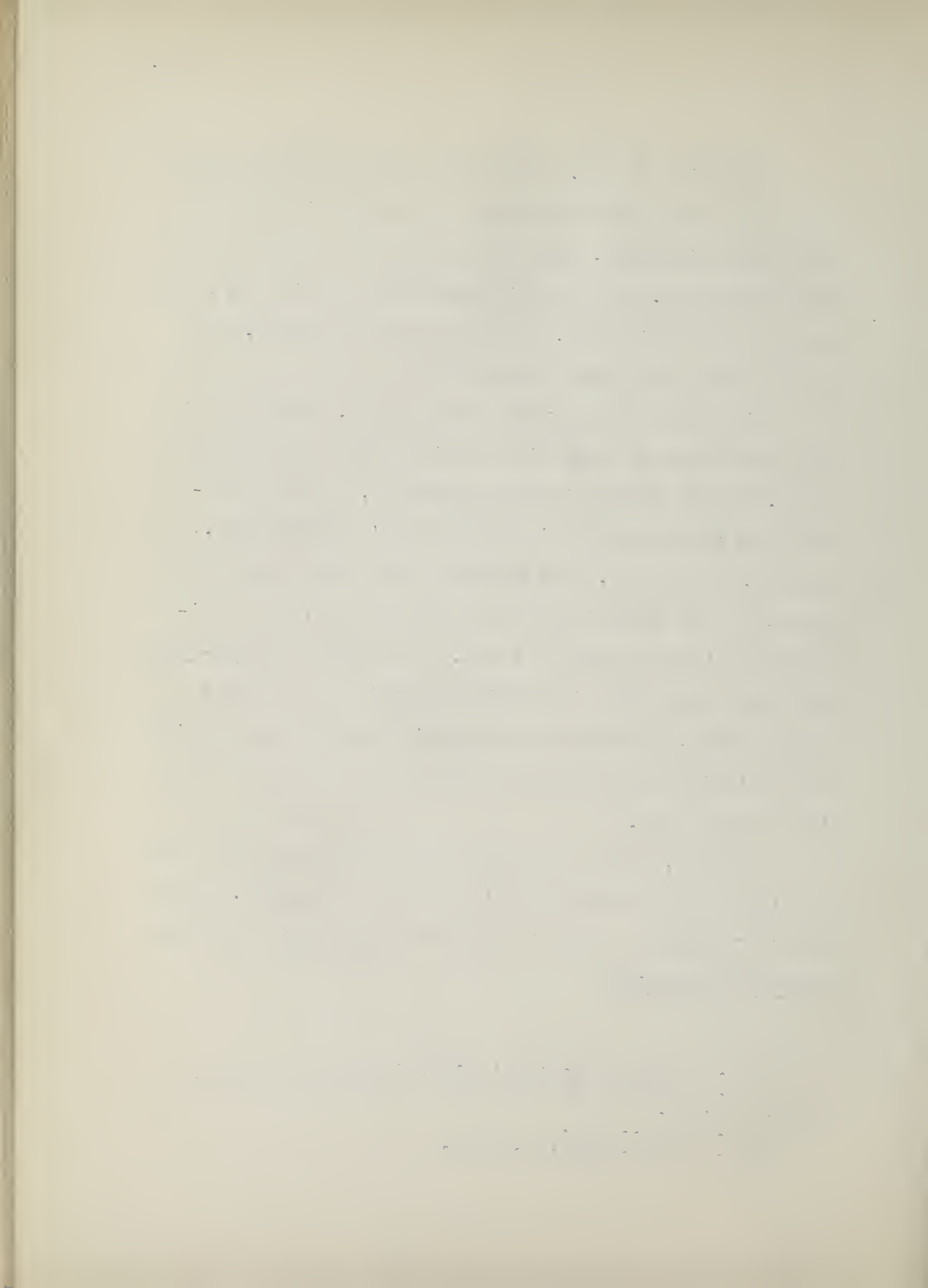
However, there are indications that the other clergy applied great pressure to bring Cotton to conform. Robert Baylie in England wrote in his book A Disswasive from the Errors of the Time:

55. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 259.

56. A report of the trial is printed in Adams, ACMB, 283-336.

57. Ibid., 292.

58. Adams, TEMH, I, 514f.



I have been informed by a gracious Preacher who was present at the Synod in New England, that all the Brethren there, being exceedingly scandalized with Mr. Cottons carriage, in Mistris Hutchinsons processe, did so farre discountenance, and so severely admonish him, that hee was therby brought to the greatest shame, confusion and grieve of mind, that ever in his life he had endured.⁵⁹

Those are pretty strong words, yet even allowing for over-statement they do suggest that his brother elders did reprove Cotton, and that firmly. Cotton acknowledges as much in his defense. He protests that not all the Brethren were scandalized, and those that were did not so severely admonish him, and he had felt deeper grief than their disapproval--

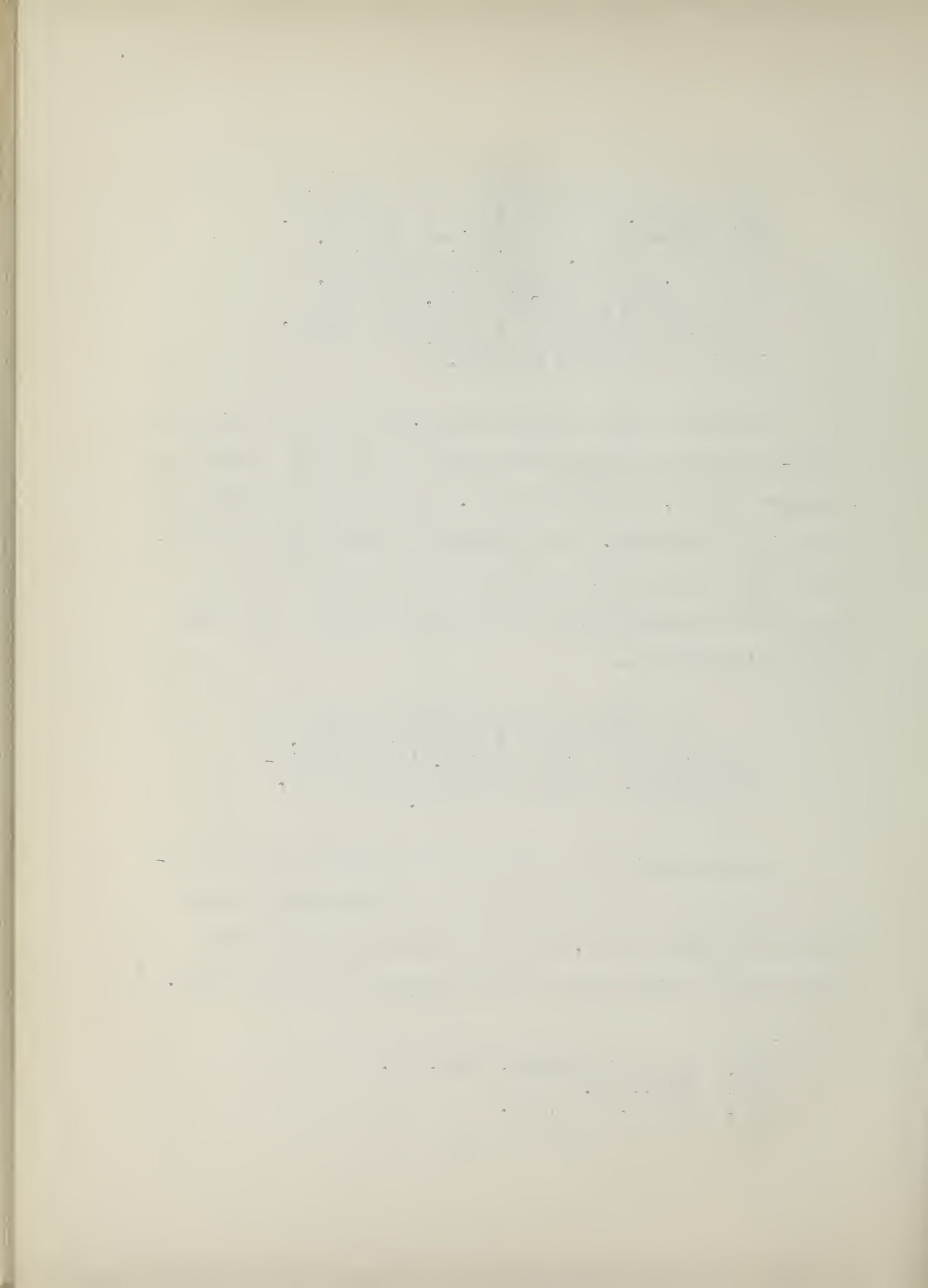
The rebukes of God upon the soule for sin will put a man to far greater shame, and confusion and grief of mind, then any discountenance, or admonition from Brethren, (especially for such offenses.)⁶⁰

Cotton admits that there were certain people of influence who held that his doctrine of union with Christ "was the Trojan Horse, out of which all the erroneous Opinions and differences of the Country did issue forth."⁶¹

59. Quoted in Cotton, WCCC, 64.

60. Ibid., 65.

61. Cotton, WCCC, 53.



There can be little doubt that Cotton felt deeply the reaction of his fellow-ministers. There is among the Cotton Papers in the Boston Public Library a letter written to Cotton by his cousin, and just biographer, Samuel Whiting. The letter reads in part:

I am full of trouble, my heart is greatly afflicted in these your afflictions, my bowels are moved within me for you. The Lord Jesus be consolation to you, tho my Dear Cousin, I doubt not but he is and will be the same which he hath formerly been, and yt you find him succor and suport, a present help in time of trouble. He was wont to be afflicted in his peoples afflictions, and he hath lost none of his compassions at his blessed fathers right hand.⁶²

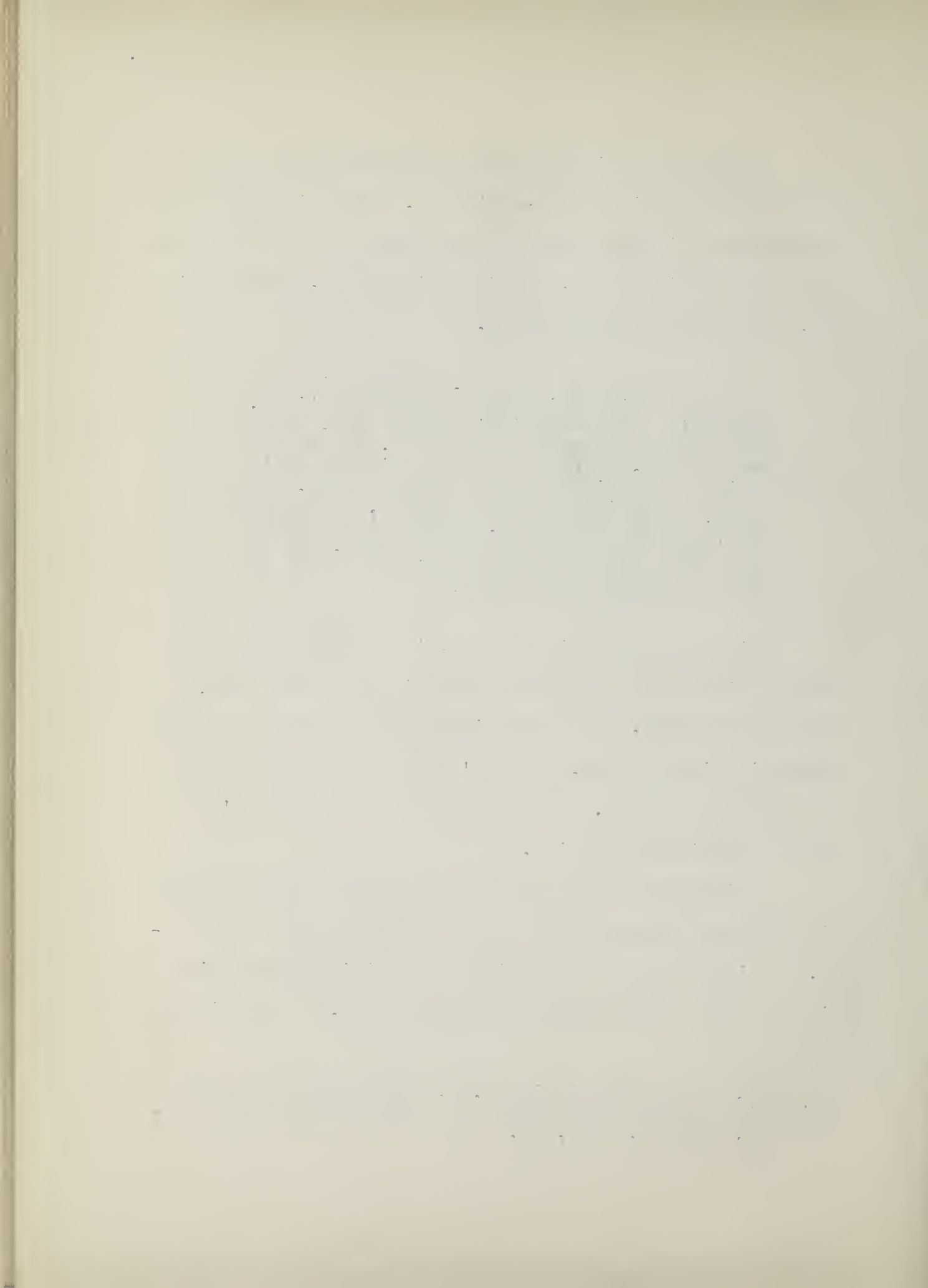
While the letter is undated, it was the guess of Thomas Prince that the letter was written at the time of the Synod of 1637, and a notation to that effect is on the manuscript in his hand. Prince's guess is a natural one and probably correct. The letter thus shows Cotton's mental turmoil at the time.

So intensely did Cotton feel the undercurrent against him that he considered moving from the Massachusetts colony. At least sixty people signed a petition encouraging him to leave and offering to accompany him.⁶³ The signers

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62. The letter is in No. 8, Part II of the Cotton Papers in the Rare Book Room of the Boston Public Library.

63. Cotton, WCCC, 53.



were probably his parishioners. Cotton is careful to point out that he did not intend to follow Mrs. Hutchinson to Rhode Island but rather to go to New Haven.⁶⁴ Since Mrs. Hutchinson did not leave Massachusetts until the spring of 1638, and it was after she had left that Cotton toyed with the idea of going himself, we may assume that even his conduct at the church trial did not completely satisfy the other elders as to the orthodoxy of his doctrine.

In one of his controversial exchanges with Roger Williams Cotton gives as the real reason for his contemplating departure from Massachusetts:

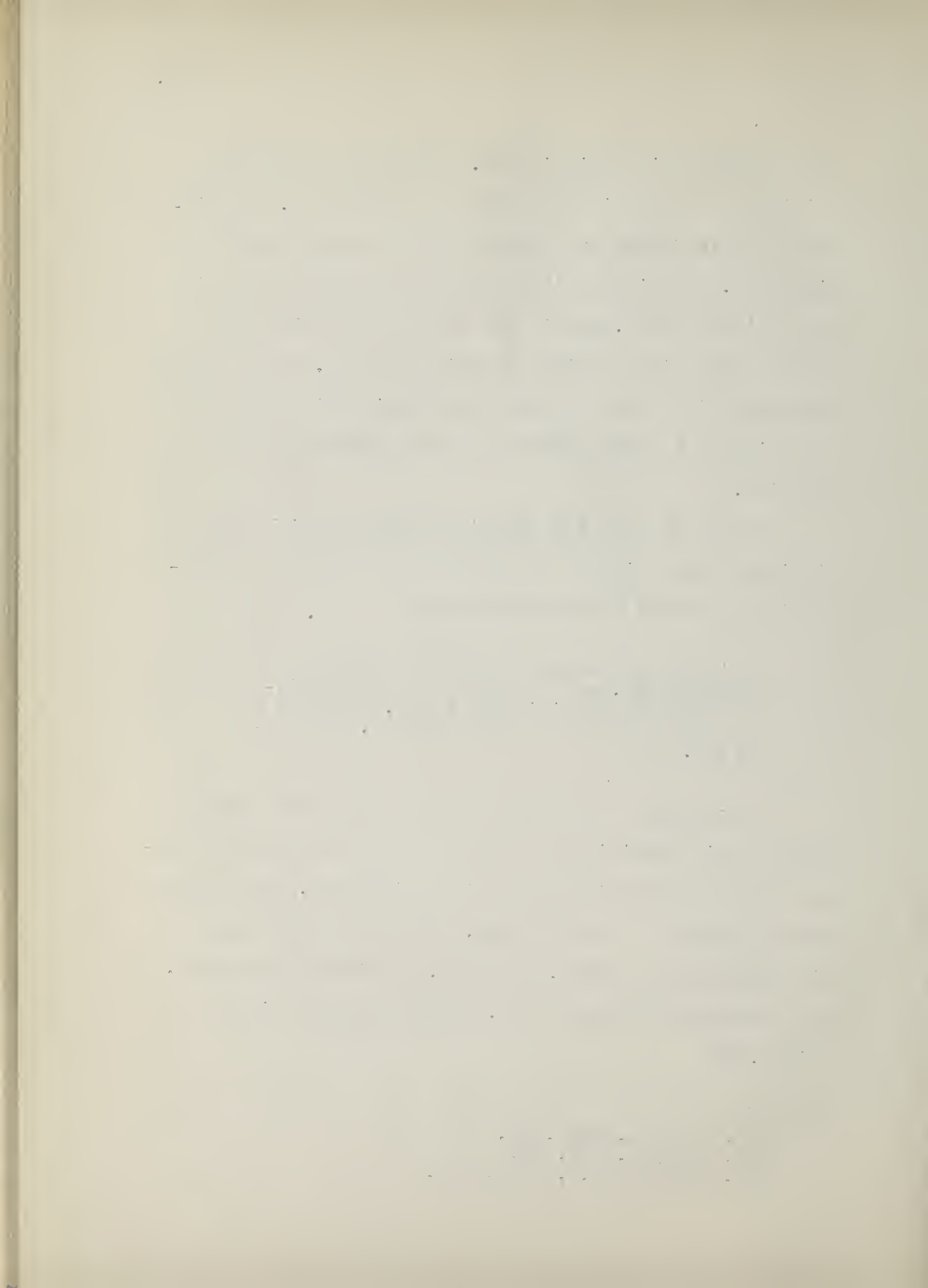
an inward loathnesse to be troublesome to godly mindes, and a feare of the unprofitablenesse of my Ministry there, where my way was suspected to be doubtfull, and dangerous.⁶⁵

Undoubtedly the clergy in the colony were long in losing their suspicion of John Cotton; they could not forget that Anne Hutchinson was his parishioner, that she had come to America because of him, that she thought more of him than of any of them, and that, as Winthrop observed, she "pretended she was of Mr. Cottons judgment in all things."⁶⁶

64. Cotton, WCCC, 54.

65. Cotton, ARW, 82.

66. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 230.



It appears that Cotton would never have submitted Mrs. Hutchinson to the humiliation of a church censure had it not been requested by the other ministers. Winthrop in his Short Story writes that "the Church of Boston, by the solicitation of some of the Elders of the other Churches, proceeded against Mistris Hutchinson."⁶⁷ In his Journal Winthrop is even more explicit. Mrs. Hutchinson spent the winter of 1637-38 in Roxbury in semi-imprisonment, where various ministers visited her and were disturbed to find that she still adhered to her errors. Therefore "some of them wrote to the church at Boston, offering to make proof of the same before the church...whereupon she was called."⁶⁸

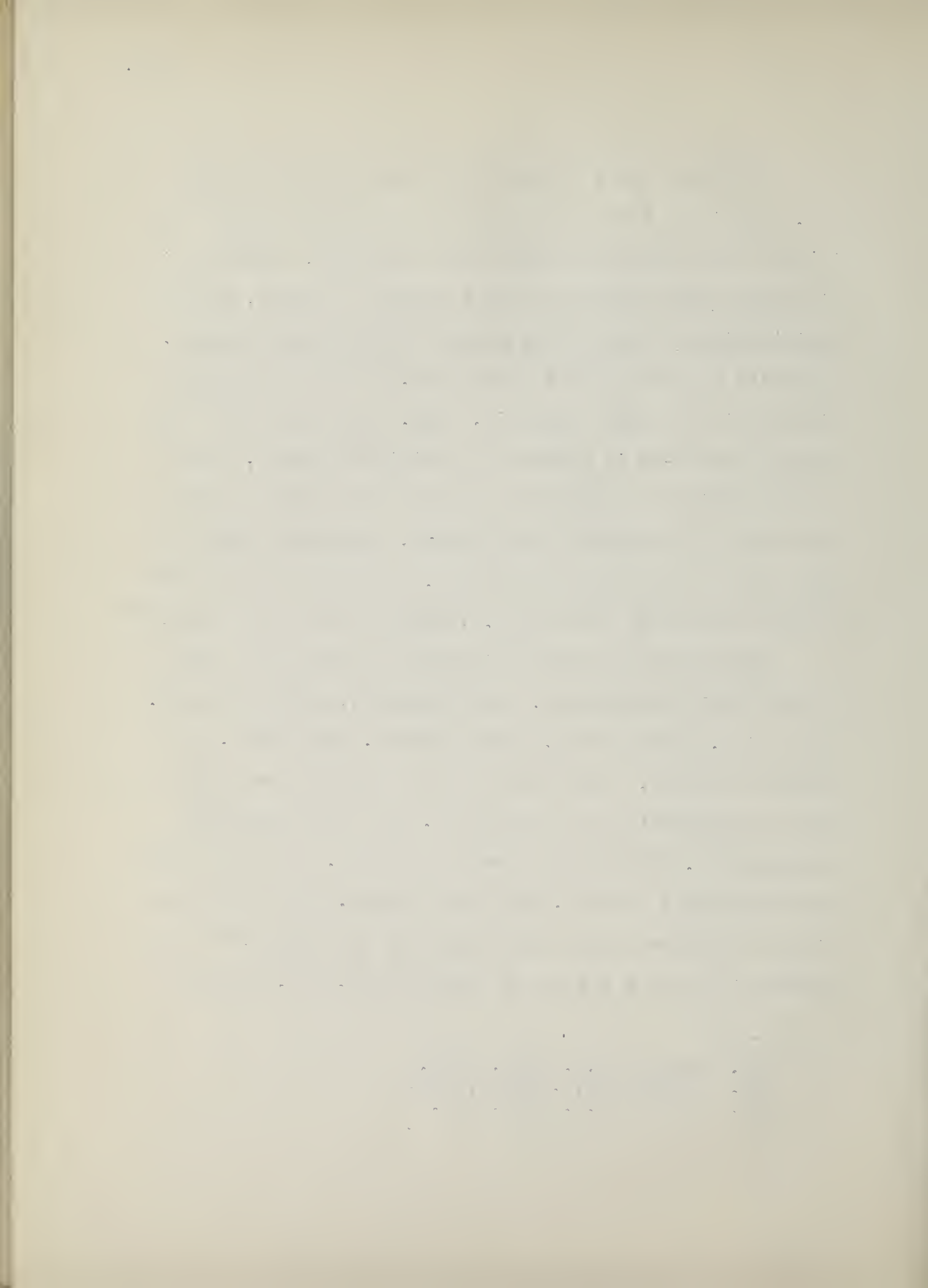
Most of the prominent ministers of the colony were at the trial; John Wilson, John Davenport, Thomas Shepard, John Eliot, Thomas Welde, Peter Bulkley, Hugh Peter, and Zechariah Symmes. When the trial had reached the point where an Admonition was called for, the other clergymen requested Mr. Cotton to do the admonishing, since his words "may be of more Respect, and sinke deeper, and soe was more likely to doe more good upon the party offendinge."⁶⁹ And perhaps it was for their own satisfaction, too, that the

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67. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 186f.

68. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 260.

69. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 310.



other ministers asked Mr. Cotton to admonish one whom he had earlier defended.

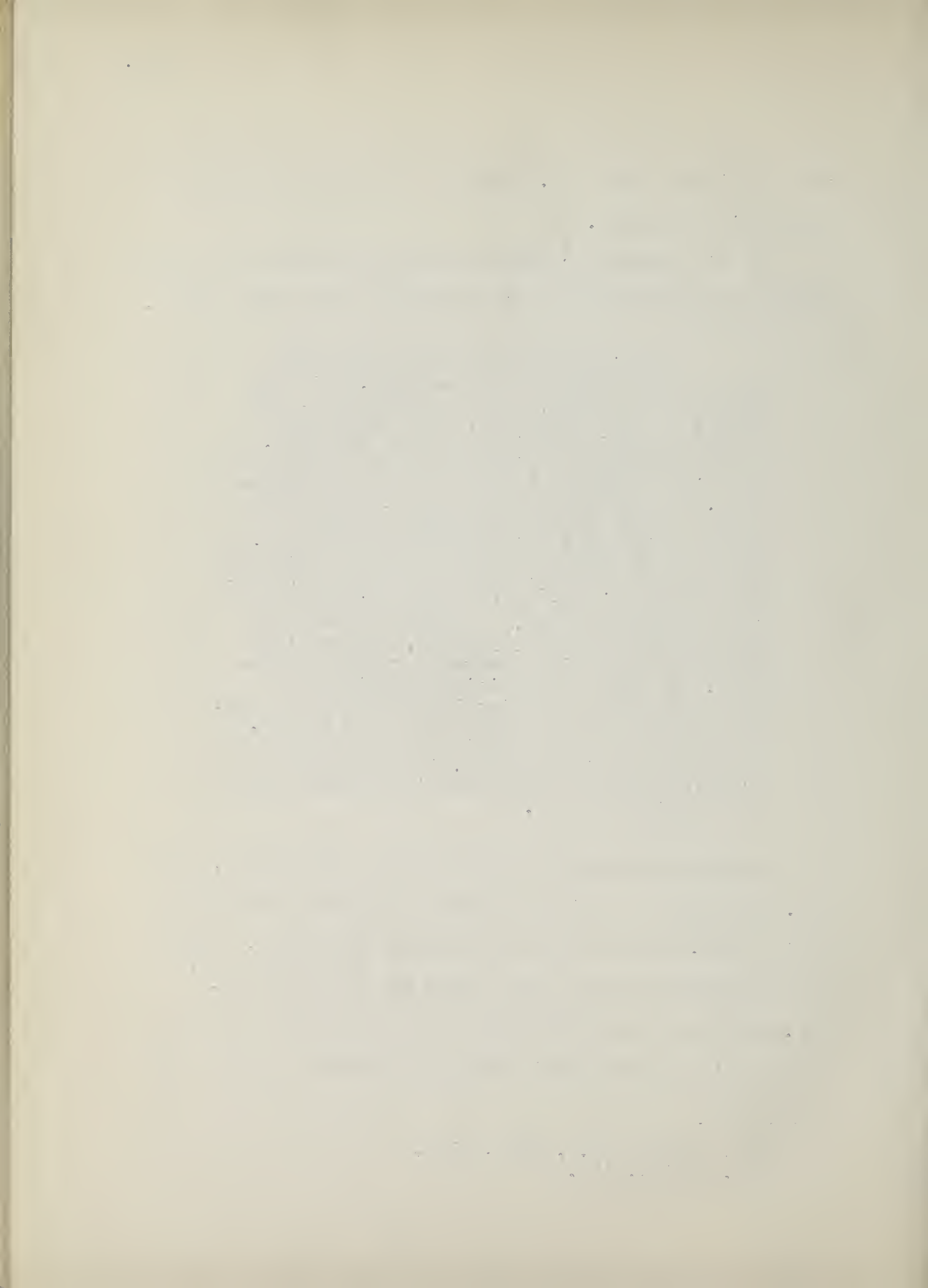
In his admonition Cotton plainly says that the Boston church proceeding had been instigated by the other elders.

I doe in the first place blesse the Lord: and thanke in my owne Name, & in the Name of owr Church, theas owr Brethren, the Elders of other Churches, for thear Care & faythfullnes in waching over owr Churches, & for bringinge to Light what owr selves have not bine soe ready to see in any of owr Mem- bers, & to take soe much paynes, to seeke to reduce any of owrs from goinge astray: & I shall desier that this faythfull and watch- full care of thears towards [us] may still be continued: & I dowbt not but the Lord Je: Ch: who is head of the whole Church will reward it into thear Bosoms. I confess I have not bine ready to beleeeve Reports, & have bine slowe of proceedinge agaynst any of owr Mem- bers, for want of sufficient Testimony to prove that wch hath bine layd to thear charge. But now they have proceded in a way of God, & doe bringe such Testimonie: as doth Evince the Truth of what is affirmed, it would be owr sine if we should not joyne in the same wch we are willinge to doe.⁷⁰

At the continuation of the trial a week later, when Mrs. Hutchinson was given a chance to answer the charges against her, Cotton played an inconspicuous part. Again "all the Elders of the other Churches" were present.⁷¹ Mrs. Hutchinson contended that she had held none of her errors prior to her imprisonment at Roxbury. As this was

70. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 310f.

71. Ibid., 318.



held to be a lie, it seemed proper to Mr. Cotton for Mr. Wilson to pronounce the sentence of excommunication. This Wilson did, charging Anne Hutchinson "as a leper to withdraw your selfe out of the congregation."⁷²

That the whole episode was a difficult one for Cotton both personally and socially we can well imagine. During the interlude between her first and second appearance before the Boston church, Mrs. Hutchinson stayed at the parsonage with John Cotton and John Davenport, who did their best to dissuade her from her errors.⁷³ At her second appearance she reiterated that there was no disagreement between her and her teacher. Cotton probably squirmed uneasily when Thomas Dudley took up the refrain:

I doe remember, that when she was examined, abowt the six Questions or Articles, abowt Revelations &c, that she held nothinge but what Mr. Cotton held.⁷⁴

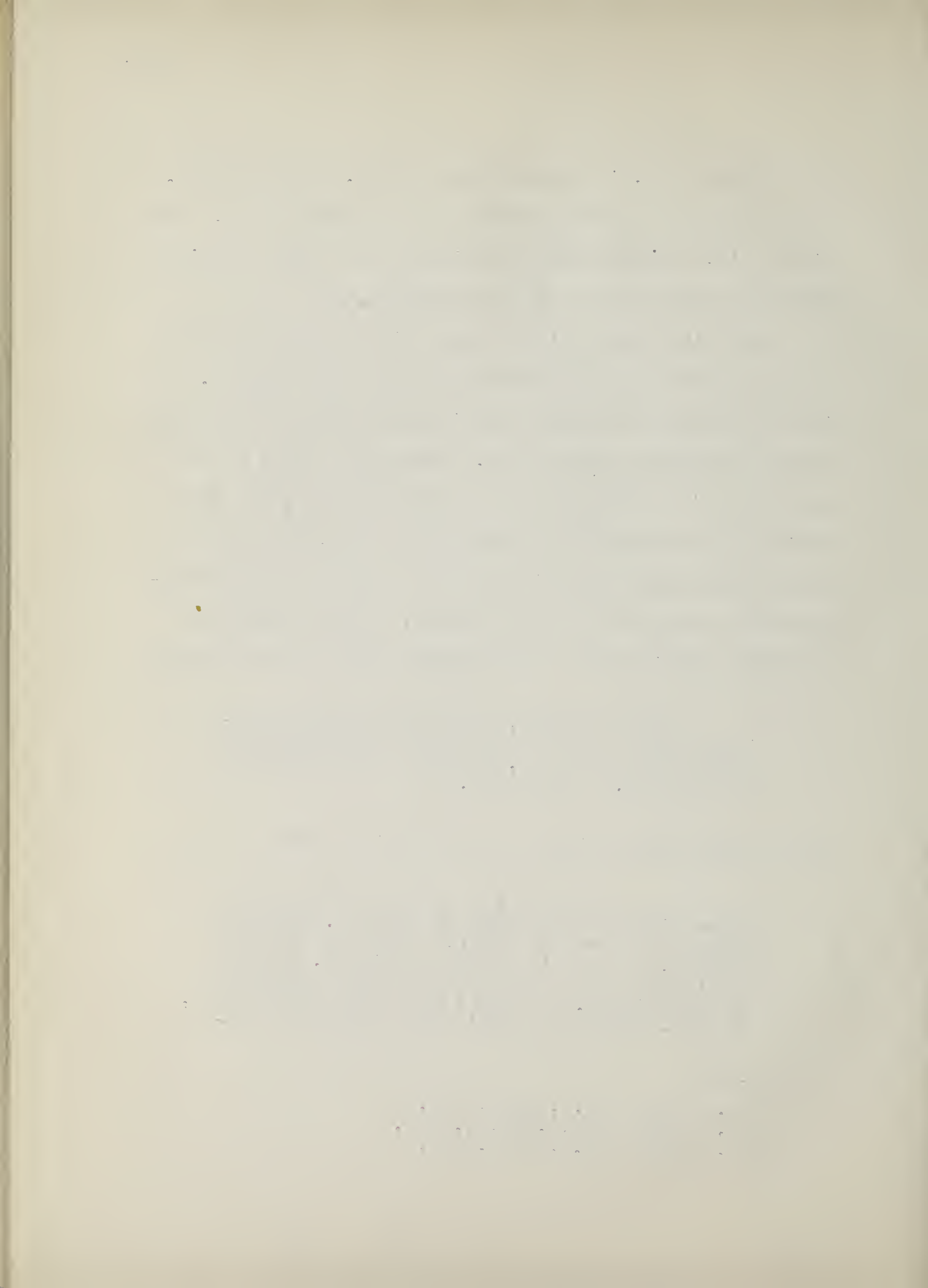
Then Thomas Welde chimed in and made it a duet:

I cane affirme the same to, for when I spake with her she tould me that Mr. Cotten & she was both of one minde, & she held no more than Mr. Cotten did in theas Thinges, & whan I told her that then she was lately chaynged in her Opinion, & I urged her with some Thinges, that Mr. Cotten had left some Thinges in Wri-

72. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 336.

73. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 263.

74. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 327.



tinge expressly agaynst some of the Opinions she held; she affirmed still that thear was no difference between Mr. Cotton and she.⁷⁵

Fortunately for Mr. Cotton the testimony took another turn at that time, but it could not fail to impress the listeners.

Nearly two years after Mrs. Hutchinson's banishment, the Boston church sent a delegation of three members to Rhode Island to see how Mrs. Hutchinson and her followers were making out. The delegation's report to the church is found in a notebook of Robert Keayne, whom we have met before.⁷⁶ When the reporter began to tell of the delegation's encounter with Mrs. Hutchinson, he was abruptly silenced by Cotton who proceeds to discourse at length and then brings the meeting to a close.

Reporter ...Then we tould her we had a message to her from the church of ch in Boston. She replied, she knew no church but one we tould her: in scripture the Ho. Ghost calls them churches She sayd Ch had but one spouse we tould her he had in some sort as many spouses as sts [saints?]; but for our church she would not acknowledge it any church of Ch.

75. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 327.

76. Printed in *ibid.*, 393-401.

Cotton Time beinge farr spent it will not be seasonable to speake much, we blesse god with our Brethren for thear protection in thear journey, assunder & together, & we finde thay have faythfully & wisely discharged the trust & care put upon them.⁷⁷

Cotton's conscience may have bothered him, or he did not like to hear such words being said about his church. Even at that late date he was probably still regarded by many with suspicion. It is significant that the first day the colonial clergy descended on Boston to snuff out heresy there, Cotton presented his body of laws to the General Court, and the motion was made that the laws be "taken into further consideration."⁷⁸

From that time forward whenever Cotton proposed anything of moment in the Colony, the memory of the Antinomian Controversy rose up to make the leaders of Massachusetts take it into "further consideration." The subject of the controversy was never a pleasing one to Cotton.⁷⁹ On his deathbed he instructed his son to take from his study all the papers relating to the Controversy and burn them; they were already bundled for that purpose since Cotton intended to destroy them before his fatal illness

77. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 398.

78. Hosmer (ed.), WJ, I, 196.

79. Adams (ed.), ACMB, 339n.

took him.⁸⁰ This attitude toward the Hutchinson dispute and its tangible remnants is understandable. More than any other affair in which he was involved, the Antinomian Controversy limited his influence.

80. Hutchinson, HCB, I, 152n.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

John Cotton at Trinity College and Emmanuel College imbibed Puritanism along with his studies. He spent int all fifteen years in the Puritan atmosphere of Cambridge, and before he left he was Dean and head-lecturer at Emmanuel. While still not yet thirty years old, he was chosen vicar of the large St. Botolph's church in Boston. Here Cotton put in practice some of his Puritan principles and refused to conform to some of the ceremonies of the Church.

He became a leader in the Puritan movement in England. Dr. John Preston, head of Emmanuel College, sent many young Puritans from his college to study with Cotton in an informal post-graduate course. While we are unable to discover his connection with the leaders who decided to settle Massachusetts, no doubt he was apprised of their plans and was probably asked to accompany them to the New World in 1630. This he did not do, but he did preach a farewell sermon to the Winthrop fleet in that same year. A few months later he contributed some money to the colony.

Cotton was not unanimously liked in his parish; not all of his parishioners were confirmed Puritans. Finally his enemies got the upper hand, complained to the High Commission Court, and he was forced to flee. He resigned his charge and prompted by letters from Winthrop and the Boston church in New England, he sailed for the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1633.

There is a possibility Boston in New England was named in his honor, though it is only a possibility. It was thought most fitting on his arrival that he should settle in that town, since it was the leading community in the colony. Here for nearly twenty years he preached in an acceptable fashion, covering most of the Bible at least once, and some portions of it twice in the course of his ministry.

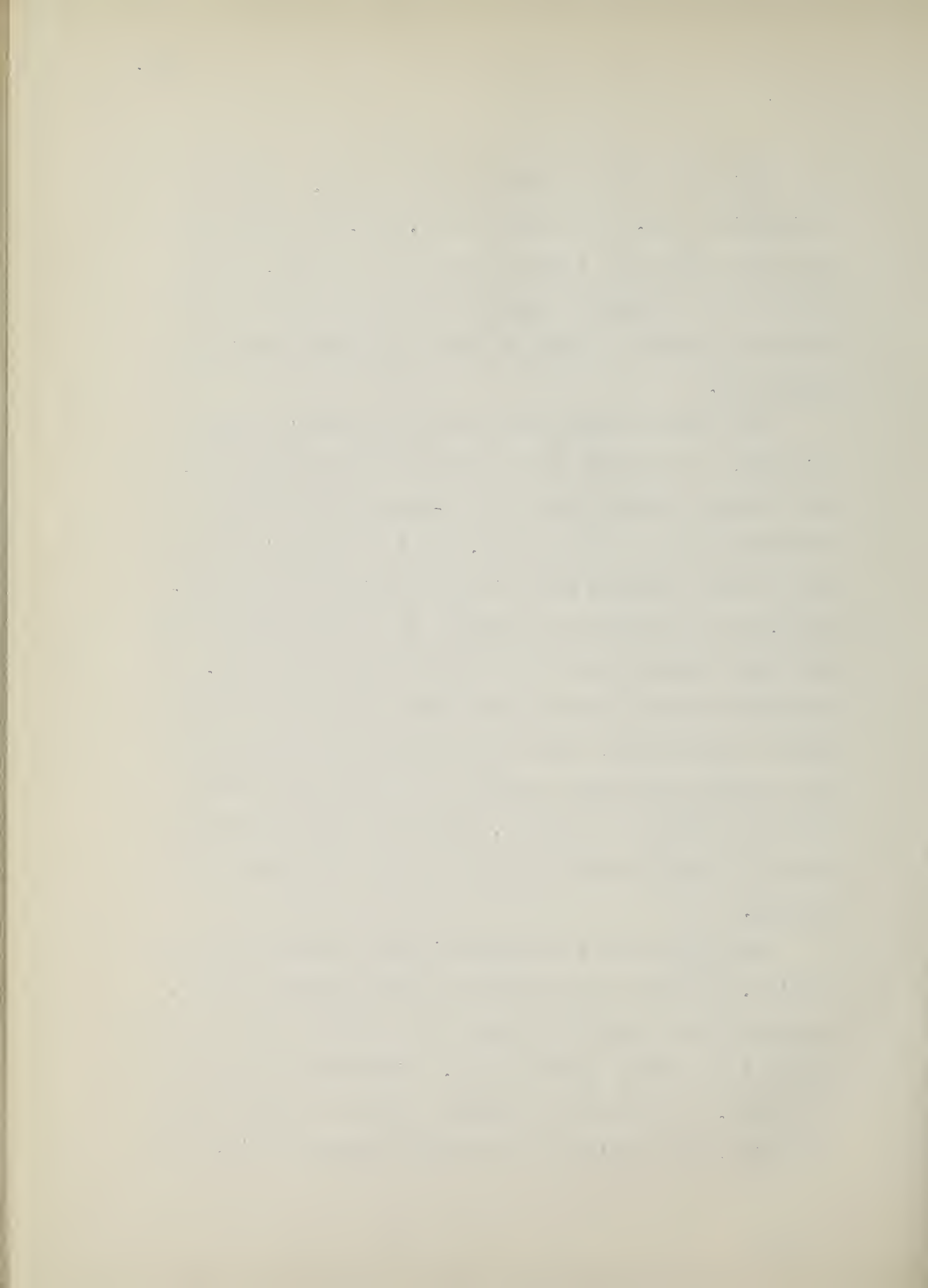
Not only was Cotton a remarkable preacher, but he was a noteworthy student too. It is said he used to study twelve hours a day, thus being dependent upon his chief laymen to keep him informed of the condition of his constituency. He often remarked he would rather give a visitor a handful of money than be kept from his studies for the time of the visit. He was a devoted student of the writings of Calvin.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded for religious reasons, and its rulers, therefore, gave heed to

the opinions of the clergymen of the colony. When the legislative body, the General Court, met, the ministers were also there in a body to consult and advise. After laws for the colony were passed, they were given to the clergy to approve the code of laws or suggest possible amendments.

The General Court met usually in Cotton's church building. We can know that Cotton was usually present, for often he preached the lecture-sermon which always preceded sessions of the court. Part of Cotton's influence no doubt derived from his friendship with John Winthrop, who was nine years Governor of the commonwealth and other years usually served in some official capacity. Henry Vane too was Governor one year and he lived in the home of John Cotton. Most of the magistrates in the colony attended the weekly lecture that Cotton gave every Thursday afternoon in Boston. And the lecturer was not averse to dealing with civil matters in the course of his remarks.

But Cotton was not supreme in his influence on civil affairs. In 1634 he preached the first Election sermon, proposing that no man be turned out of office unless he had betrayed the public trust in him. Winthrop was turned out of office. Cotton was an intense advocate of life tenure of office, yet despite his continued advocacy of it, life



tenure was not adopted. The Standing Council with which he was in sympathy and undoubtedly supported proved to be a useless instrument of government, because the deputies were antagonistic to the idea. The draft of laws which Cotton drew up for the colony was turned down, and a draft prepared by Nathaniel Ward was accepted.

Cotton never lost his influence over Winthrop. In 1648 Winthrop sent Cotton the preface to the laws to be printed that year, apparently seeking advice. Cotton suggested two changes, and Winthrop accepted them both.

Cotton was influential in the colonial church partly by reason of the prominence of his church; the Boston church was probably the leading church in the commonwealth. It was not uncommon to ask her teacher to help decide where immigrating preachers should settle. Cotton established the idea of a week-day lecture in the colony, and this was followed by several of the other churches. At least one magistrate asked Cotton's opinion of Roger Williams, and Williams held Cotton responsible for his banishment. Apparently Williams felt his adversary should have persuaded the magistrates against the banishment.

But Cotton was not supreme in church affairs. There is good evidence that Thomas Hooker left Massachusetts because he did not entirely approve of Cotton's influence and ideas. Cotton continually wielded his pen in behalf

of New England Congregationalism, expounding, describing, and defending the principles upon which that Congregationalism was founded. Yet the model of church government that he offered for acceptance to a synod of New England churches was refused. Professor Williston Walker points out that Richard Mather's model which was accepted did not differ materially from Cotton's model. In fact, Mather incorporated much from John Cotton's printed works into his own model. It is surprising that Cotton's model was not given a preference over that of Mather, in view of the supposed enormous influence of Cotton.

Cotton was of the opinion that the clergy should be supported by voluntary contribution and not taxation. After he came to New England the Boston church so supported him and his colleague. However, other churches continued to levy the minister's salary by tax. Despite Cotton's opposition to granting ministers public land in return for their services, thousands of acres were given to the clergy.

Cotton's most popular work was his catechism for children, Spiritual Milk for Babes, for it was still in use nearly one hundred and fifty years after his death.

The Antinomian Controversy centered around Anne Hutchinson, who was Cotton's parishioner both in England and in New England. For a while Cotton defended her in

her heresy, and not without reason. It is impossible that she could have won so many of the Boston church to her way of thinking unless, as she contended, her views were pretty much in accord with those of Cotton. In his defense of Mrs. Hutchinson, Cotton found himself arrayed against all the other ministers of the colony with the exception of John Wheelwright, Mrs. Hutchinson's brother-in-law. Most of the Boston church was sympathetic with their erring sister, although John Winthrop was not one of her supporters.

The clergy put pressure on Cotton to conform to their way of thinking and to desert Mrs. Hutchinson, which he eventually did. During the public trial of Mrs. Hutchinson, Cotton almost got into trouble himself. The leaders of the colony were horrified at the stand he took and nearly made him defend himself. Winthrop's timely intercession saved the day.

In the month that followed the public trial Cotton spent his time disassociating himself from the Antinomians. There is evidence that the other clergy felt so strongly against him that Cotton was forced to reconsider his defense. So at the church trial of Mrs. Hutchinson, which was initiated at the request of the other clergymen, John Cotton led the offensive against his infamous parishioner.

However, even then the teacher of the Boston church was not in complete favor in the colony. The church trial was in March 1638, Mrs. Hutchinson was banished the spring of that year; still some time after her banishment we find Cotton contemplating departure from the colony. His performance at the church trial had evidently not been satisfactory to his clerical brothers. After all, it had been they who had pressed for the church trial, not Cotton. And Anne Hutchinson did constantly maintain that she did not differ from Cotton theologically. So deeply did Cotton feel about the controversy that he commanded all his papers dealing with it to be burned.

The following conclusions seem warranted by the evidence presented in the dissertation.

1. The influence of John Cotton in the Massachusetts Bay Colony was not so strong as has been maintained. His proposed laws for the colony were not accepted, and his model of church government was refused; life tenure of office was rejected, though he ardently and constantly preached the idea.

2. Various factors have played a part in exaggerating his influence.

- (a) An uncritical acceptance of William Hubbard's judgment of Cotton's influence; not everything Cotton proposed was ordered by the court or practiced by the church.

(b) A superficial reading of John Winthrop's Journal. Had there been a journalist in the congregation of Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, or Richard Hather, writing the doings of his pastor, then we should better see Cotton's influence for what it was--and what it was not.

(c) A distortion of Williams' statement that in 1635 "some of no small note had said they could hardly believe that God would suffer Mr. Cotton to err" into meaning that practically everybody in the Massachusetts Bay Colony all the days of his life there thought Cotton beyond error.

(d) The illogical reasoning that John Cotton fathered the Congregationalism that he defended.

(e) Practically no one but Congregational clergymen have written about Cotton, and they have written almost entirely with the purpose of praise.

3. Cotton, like Winthrop, was an aristocrat, and while Winthrop was Governor of the colony, his policies were influenced by Cotton; but as the power of the democratic forces within the colony increased, the power of Cotton decreased.

4. The Antinomian Controversy was instrumental in limiting Cotton's influence among the clergy; for in the popular mind Anne Hutchinson and Henry Vane were closely connected with John Cotton. No important measure which Cotton put forward thereafter was effected.

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Manuscripts.

Among the "Cotton Papers" in the Boston Public Library are about a score of letters from the correspondence of John Cotton which must have numbered in the hundreds. The letters include those written by Cotton and those written to him during his American ministry. Most of the letters are in poor condition, some mutilated, others without date and signature. The letters deal exclusively with theological discussion. The bulk of Cotton's letters have apparently been destroyed. All his papers relating to the Antinomian Controversy were destroyed after his death at his request, and John Davenport asked for all of Cotton's correspondence with him and destroyed it. The greatest loss is undoubtedly the destruction of the papers relating to the controversy.

Primary Sources. (Printed)

Works related to the controversy which have survived have been edited by C. F. Adams and published under the title, The Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony by the Prince Society, 1894. Included therein is Winthrop's "Short Story" of the Controversy, the report of the examination of Mrs. Hutchinson before the General Court, the account of her church trial, and relevant portions from

Cotton's Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared, London, 1648.

Cotton's own works are of little value as an aid to determining his influence although, as suggested, some portions of his Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared contain his own account of the Antinomian Controversy. Most of his published works are sermons or lectures and are devoid for the most part of contemporary reference. His farewell sermon to the Winthrop Fleet is extant, God's Promise to His Plantation, London, 1630. An Abstract, or the Lawes of New England as They are Now Established, London, 1641, is a copy of the laws Cotton offered to the General Court. A Copy of the Letter of Mr. Cotton of Boston, in New England, sent in answer of certain Objections made against their Discipline and Orders there, directed to a Friend reveals certain features of the colonial church. Some letters of Cotton are included in Young's Chronicles of the First Planters of the Massachusetts Bay from 1623 to 1639, together with other valuable contemporary documents. An exchange of letters with Oliver Cromwell is included in Thomas Hutchinson's Collection of Papers, Albany, The Prince Society, 1865. Some of Cotton's other letters and other material are included in the Winthrop Papers, four volumes of which have been printed by the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929-1944. A complete bibliography of Cotton's works compiled by Julius Herbert Tuttle may be found in Bibliographical Essays, a Tribute to Wilberforce Eames, Cambridge, 1924.

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Of prime importance is John Winthrop's Journal edited by James Savage, 2 vols., Boston, 1825 and 1826. Here one sees the colony during the first nineteen years of its existence through the eyes of its first governor. More accessible is the edition by James Kendall Hosmer, 2 vols., New York, 1908. Hosmer reproduces the more important editorial footnotes by Savage. After Winthrop, the oldest colonial history is William Hubbard, General History of New England from the Discovery to MDCLXXX, Cambridge, 1815. It must be used with care as Hubbard was not excessively accurate.

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terms. He wrote

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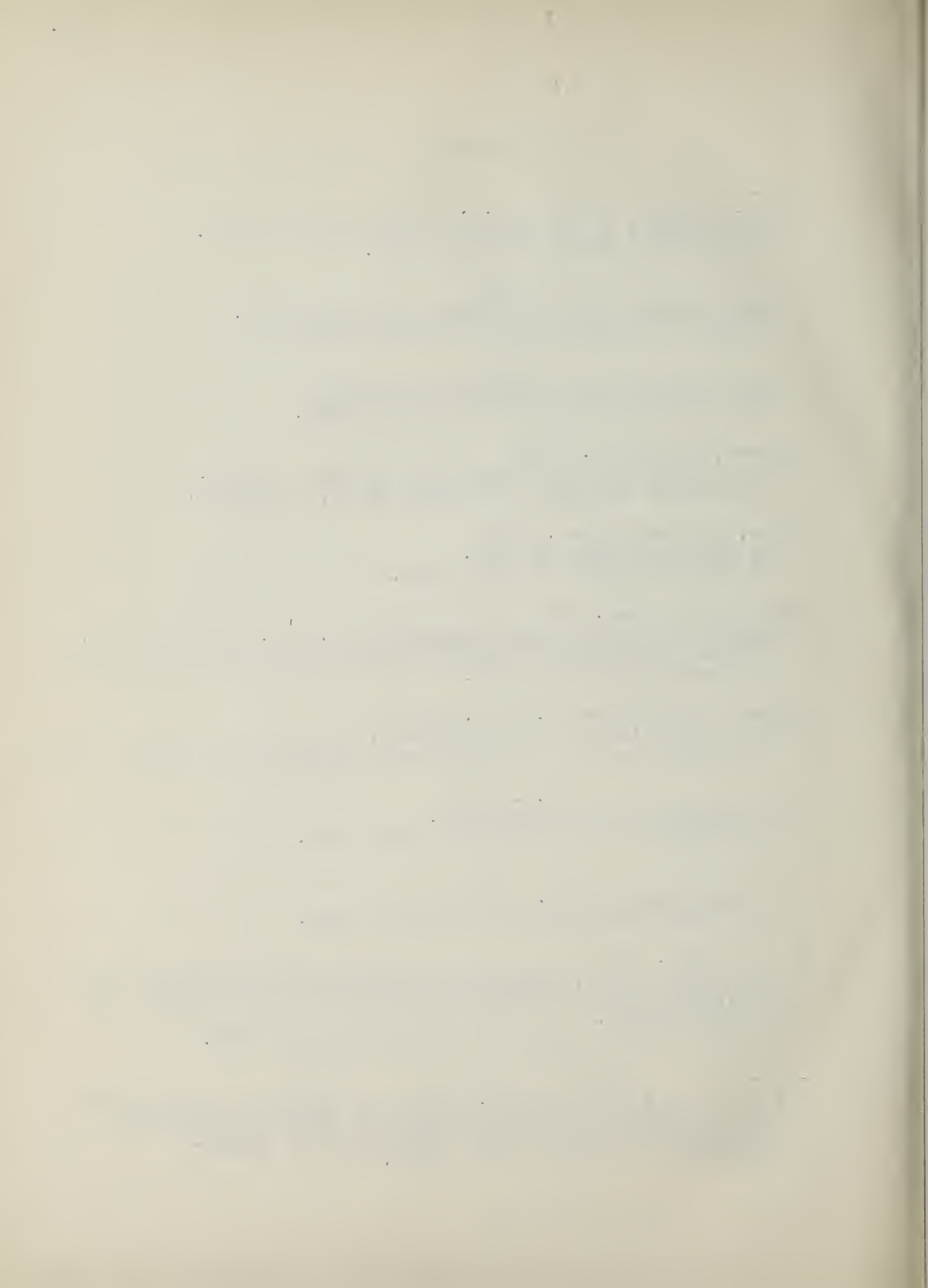
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ABSTRACT

The influence of John Cotton in the Massachusetts Bay Colony has never heretofore been studied; it has always been taken for granted. This assumed influence stems back to the writing of William Hubbard, one of Massachusetts' earliest historians. Hubbard wrote of Cotton: "Whatever he delivered in the pulpit was soon put into an Order of the Court, if of a civil, or set up as a practice in the church, if of an ecclesiastical concernment." That judgment has neither been proved nor disproved. Hubbard cited no Court orders nor Church practices to bear out his contention; later commentators have been content to accept his opinion almost unquestioningly.

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine exactly how much influence John Cotton actually had in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This has been done by following the outcome of various proposals, recommendations, and projects behind which Cotton threw the weight of his influence, and by evaluating the publication which came from his pen.

John Cotton was born in Derby, England, December 4, 1584. When he was thirteen, he was sent to Cambridge and enrolled in Trinity College. This was a training ground for young Puritans; the vast majority of college graduates who came to

New England during the first twenty years of its history had been graduated from Cambridge colleges. Cotton spent fifteen years in this Puritan atmosphere, and before he left Cambridge he was Dean and head-lecturer at Emmanuel College.

While not yet thirty years old, he was chosen vicar of the large St. Botolph's church in Boston. Here Cotton put in practice some of his Puritan principles and refused to conform to some of the ceremonies of the Established church. He became a leader in the Puritan movement in England; and Dr. John Preston, head of Emmanuel College, sent many young Puritans from his college to study with Cotton in an informal post-graduate course.

Although Cotton's connection with the Massachusetts Bay Company is obscure, he was acquainted with its leaders some of whom were his parishioners. No doubt he was apprised of the Company's plans and invited to accompany the settlers to the New World in 1630. He did not sail with them but he did preach a farewell sermon to the Winthrop fleet. As a more material expression of his regard for the project, Cotton sent to the Massachusetts Bay Colony a small gift of money and needed foodstuffs.

There were those in old Boston who were not in sympathy with their minister's Puritanism. Finally, they complained to the High Commission court and Cotton was forced to flee. He resigned his charge and, prompted by letters from John Winthrop

and the Boston church in New England, he sailed for the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the summer of 1633.

There is a possibility, although it is only a possibility, that Boston in New England was named in honor of John Cotton. It was thought most fitting on his arrival that he should settle in Boston, since it was the leading community in the colony. Here for nearly twenty years he preached in an acceptable fashion, covering most of the Bible at least once and some portions of it twice in the course of his ministry.

Certain facts indicate the avenues through which Cotton could exert his influence. The General Court of the colony met usually in the Boston church building. We can know that Cotton was customarily present, for he often preached the lecture-sermon which always preceded the sessions of the court. Part of Cotton's influence no doubt derived from his friendship with John Winthrop, who was nine years Governor of the commonwealth and during his other years in the colony habitually served in some official capacity. Henry Vane was Governor one year and he lived in the home of John Cotton. Most of the magistrates in the colony attended the weekly lecture that Cotton gave every Thursday afternoon in Boston, and the lecturer was not averse to dealing with civil matters in the course of his remarks.

Cotton was not supreme in his influence on civil affairs. In 1634 he preached the first Election sermon, proposing that

no man be turned out of office unless he had betrayed the public's trust in him. John Winthrop was turned out of office at that same election. Cotton was an intense advocate of life tenure of governmental office, yet despite his continued advocacy of it, life tenure was never adopted. The Standing Council with which he was in sympathy and undoubtedly supported proved to be a useless instrument of government because the elected representatives of the people were antagonistic to the idea.

The influence of Cotton in the colonial church stemmed partly from the prominence of his charge; the Boston church was probably the leading church in the Commonwealth. Her teacher was sometimes asked to help decide where immigrating preachers should settle. Cotton established a week-day lecture in the colony and several of the neighboring churches copied the idea. At least one magistrate asked Cotton his opinion of Roger Williams and Williams held Cotton responsible for his banishment.

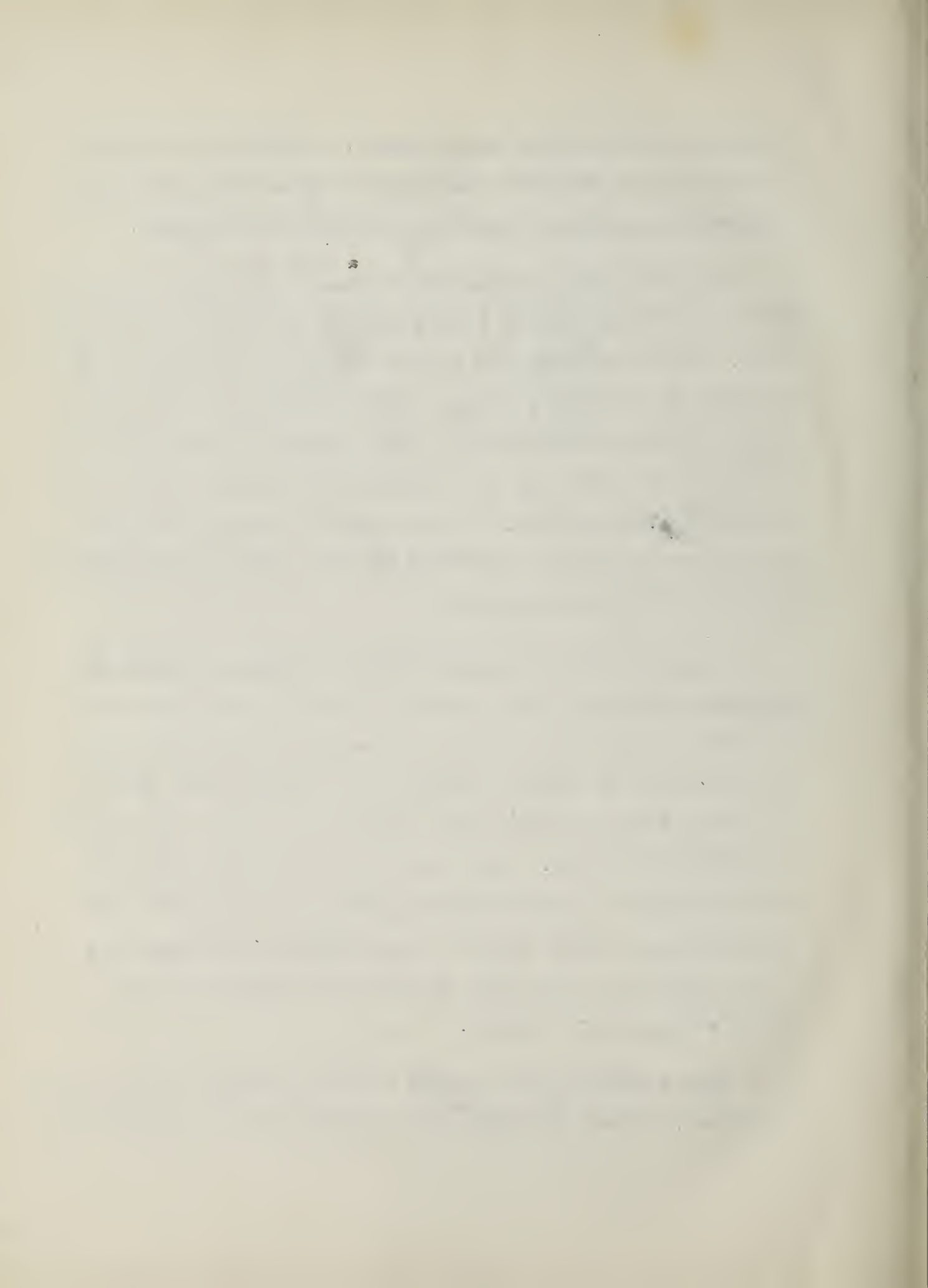
Cotton was not all-powerful in the realm of the church. There is evidence that Thomas Hooker left Massachusetts because he did not entirely approve of Cotton. Although Cotton wrote much describing and defending "the New England way" of church government, the model of church government that he offered to the synod of 1646 was refused--despite the fact that there was no material difference between it and the work

of Richard Mather which was accepted. Cotton long urged the maintenance of the clergy should be by voluntary contribution rather than taxation of land grants; he was not heeded.

The Antinomian Controversy centered around Anne Hutchinson, who was a parishioner of Cotton both in England and in New England. Cotton defended her against the charge of heresy but in doing so found himself arrayed against practically all the other ministers in the colony. The clergy put pressure on him to conform to their way of thinking and eventually he did, deserting Mrs. Hutchinson. At one point in the affair Cotton was almost the object of censure himself, and he even contemplated leaving Massachusetts.

It seems clear that the influence of John Cotton in the Massachusetts Bay Colony was not so strong as has been maintained. His proposed laws for the colony were not accepted, and his model of church government was refused; life tenure of public office was rejected, though he ardently and constantly preached the idea. Also, although he favored maintenance of the clergy by voluntary contributions, the General Court granted large tracts of land to the ministers for their services, and individual towns of the colony levied taxes to raise the ministers' salary.

Various factors have played a part in exaggerating Cotton's influence. First, an uncritical acceptance of William Hubbard's



statement about his prestige; for analysis proves that far from everything Cotton proposed was accepted. Second, a superficial reading of John Winthrop's Journal; had there been a journalist in the congregation of Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, or Richard Mather, writing the doings of his pastor, then we should better see Cotton's influence. Third, a distortion of Roger William's statement in 1635 that "some of no small note had said they could hardly believe that God would suffer Mr. Cotton to err" into meaning that practically everybody in the Massachusetts Bay Colony all the days of his life there thought Cotton beyond error. Fourth, the illogical reasoning that John Cotton founded the Congregationalism he defended. Fifth, no critical study of Cotton has ever been made; those who have written about him have done so with the purpose of praise.

John Cotton, like John Winthrop, was an aristocrat, and while Winthrop was Governor of the Colony, his policies were influenced by Cotton; as the power of the democratic forces within the Colony increased, the power of Cotton decreased.

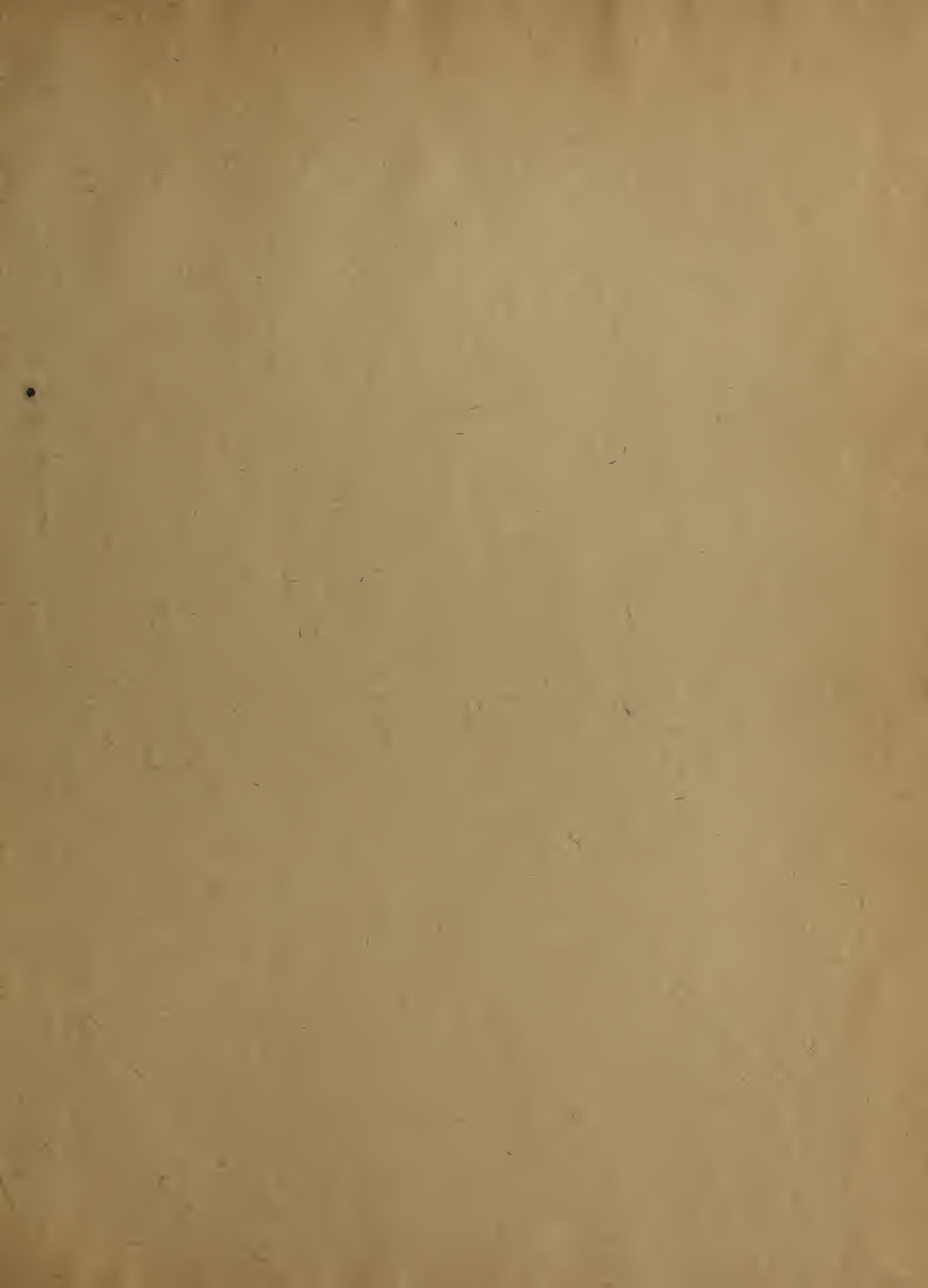
The part Cotton played in the Antinomian Controversy was also instrumental in limiting Cotton's influence. In the popular mind the ideas of Anne Hutchinson and John Cotton were closely connected. He was regarded with suspicious respect. No important measure which Cotton proposed thereafter was effected.

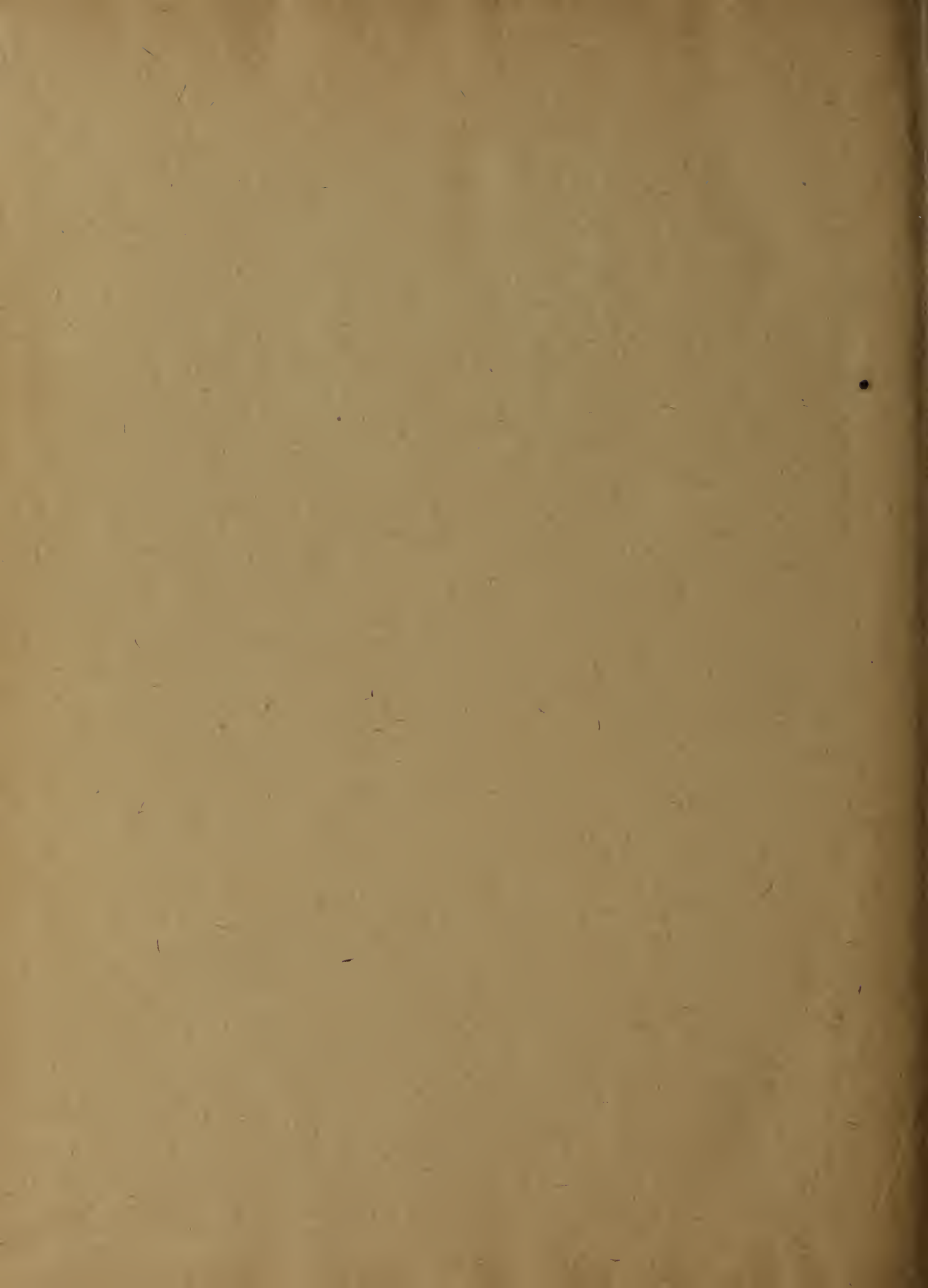


James Herbert Laird was born on November 3, 1918 at Superior, Nebraska, the son of Frank Wiltsey Laird and Effie Mae Laird. At the age of three he was taken by his parents with his two brothers to California. He was educated in Granada grammar school and the Alhambra high school in Alhambra, California. He was graduated from Pasadena Junior College in 1938 and the same year he entered the University of Redlands, from which institution he was graduated in 1940 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

In June 1940 Mr. Laird joined the Southern California-Arizona Conference of the Methodist church as a member on

trial. The fall of 1940 he entered Boston University School of Theology, from which he was graduated in 1943 with a degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology. After his graduation from seminary, Mr. Laird served as student-pastor of the Methodist church in Peabody, Massachusetts, while he pursued graduate studies at Boston University. In May 1946 Mr. Laird was ordained an elder in the Methodist church by Bishop Lewis O. Hartman, then he was admitted into full membership in the New England Conference and re-appointed to the Methodist church in Peabody as the full-time pastor.





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